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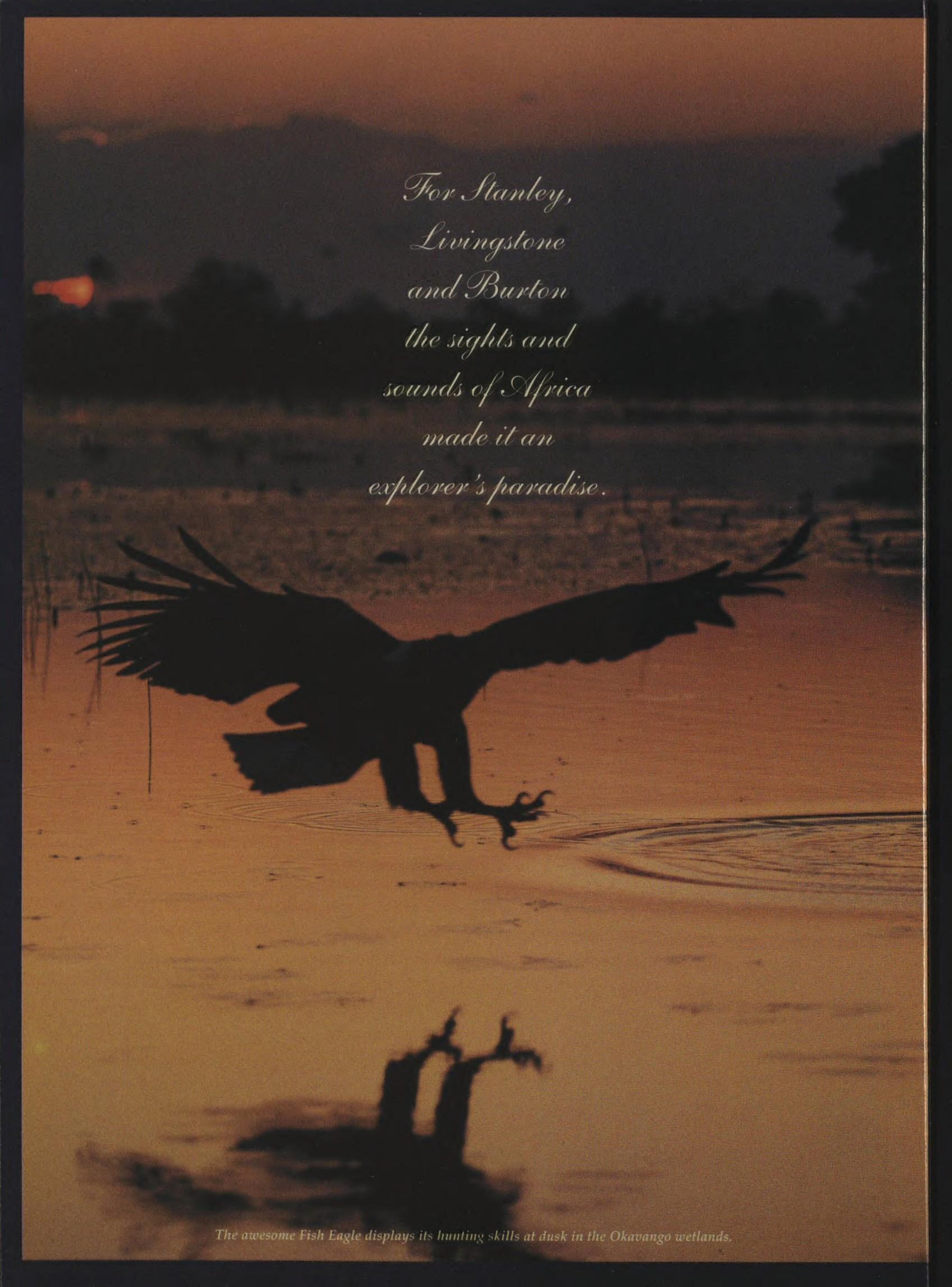


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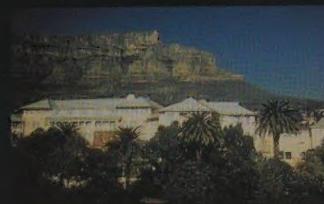
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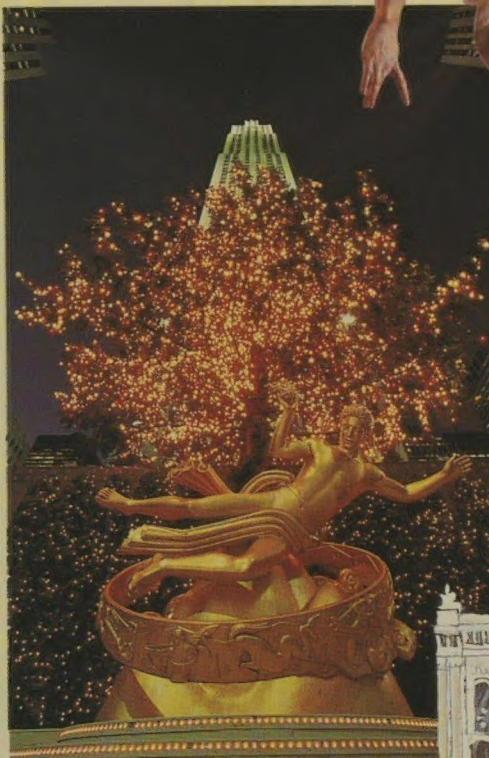
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*Cover, illustration
of medieval jester with Christmas crackers
by Jane Thomson.*



*Left, meet the cats
who look after
London purrfectly.
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A PARLIAMENTARY

Edwina Currie forecasts a working holiday for our MPs.

CHRISTMAS

Members of Parliament greet every Christmas recess with sighs of relief. This is their opportunity, they would have you believe, to attend events in the constituency without having to dash away early to vote. This is their chance to spend time with their families. This, briefly, is when they act more like ordinary human beings, or at least merge with the crazier of their constituents. In practice, in common with the rest of Britain, it's a time for MPs to eat, drink and be rude about the Queen's Christmas message. The thought of rubbing shoulders with the hoi polloi at this season of goodwill towards all men carries with it no more appeal than at any other time.

This year might be a little different. In case you hadn't noticed, an election is due. The last possible date is in May 1997, and the most likely choice (I'll let you into a secret) is May 1. The boys at Conservative Central Office reckon that to fight Labour on International Socialism Day will bring us luck. I wish.

Thus our MPs will have to work this Christmas. At least, those with marginal seats—and that means anyone on my side with a majority of less than 10,000. So don't be surprised if your Member appears unusually assiduous this winter. You will see him or her in the supermarket entrance canvassing, frantically trying to buttonhole voters, who (since their purpose is to get the drink in) may be less than thrilled by his approaches.

It won't last, but catch him while you can. Holding a carol concert? Invite him and his family to attend, they'll be sure to turn up and put a fiver in the plate. If he doesn't, shake the salver under his nose with an "I won't vote for you unless . . ." expression on your face. Looking for some cachet for your Yuletide amateur dramatics?



*DON'T BE SURPRISED TO SEE YOUR MEMBER
CANVASSING IN THE SUPERMARKET
ENTRANCE, TRYING TO BUTTONHOLE VOTERS.*

Suggest that the Honourable Member might like a starring part as Captain Hook. He'll accept with gratitude and the boos will be so much more fervent. He might even be dissuaded from making a speech at the end on the grounds that he'd won over everybody already.

One year I went carol singing on Christmas Eve round our local infirmary with the nurses. Most patients had been sent home, but

special surgery sessions had been held for people with no relatives so they could share some cheer. As we warbled "Silent Night" in the men's ward, I felt a hand run up and down the back of my leg. In horror I looked round and saw a well-known local Tory. "I've got appendicitis," he croaked with a weak grin. "And I've always wanted to do that, Edwina."

The Commons itself is frantically busy in the week before

recess, then suddenly deserted. In the bowels of the place decorous parties are held by odd cohorts—security staff, the catering department, the Clerks of the Table. Both Houses attend a carol concert in the vast chill of Westminster Hall, whose lofty buttresses bear the fingerprints of wicked King Richard III. Its grim walls have witnessed deadly deeds. Your chair is probably over the brass plaque commemorating the trial of Sir Thomas More by King Henry VIII or of William Wallace ("Braveheart") in 1305. Oliver Cromwell's head was exhibited here on a spike for 20 years until it was blown down in a storm. Despite the decorated tree and Salvation Army band it's hard to summon up merriment among the whispering ghosts.

The new Speaker, Betty Boothroyd, decided one tree wasn't enough, so had a second erected in New Palace Yard, where taxis enter for Members' entrance. It stands on the green-sward over the underground car park, where we are forbidden to walk. (A concession is made for David Blunkett's guide dog who, I gather, thinks it's wonderful.)

One genuine reason for refusing engagements in the two weekends before festivities commence is the drudge of writing hundreds of Christmas cards. Every constituency officer gets one, and key party workers, and council staff, and anybody specially useful or helpful—our postmaster, the VAT inspector, the head of the local social security office, who never fails to deal with my queries with tact, clarity and despatch. That adds up to about 400 for me each year. And woe betide if I forget someone. A reproachful note will arrive on New Year's Day, by when it's too late to make amends.

The deal is that to alleviate the burden, MPs don't send cards to each other, with a couple of notable exceptions: the adorable

David Evans, MP for Welwyn, gives one to everybody. We don't get a card from Madam Speaker either. On the other hand, Prime Minister Major sends a picture of the White Drawing Room at Number 10, signed by him and Norma, to all his MPs. (Margaret Thatcher's was usually herself and Denis on the staircase, with the Iron Lady's eyes slightly off camera as though in a rush to be elsewhere, and her consort staring straight into the lens with a big grin as if about to say, "Thanks! Mine's a double.") Last year John Major's enthusiasm for me knew no bounds and I got two cards, the same, though one did look suspiciously as though a stamp had been used for the signature. Second thoughts?

Constituents expect to receive the official House of Commons card; some collect them year after year. That has caused a problem recently. The choice is Madam Speaker's. For her first Christmas Betty picked a snap of the lighted tree under Big Ben: a bit dull, was the comment. Since then it's got worse.

It grieves me to say it, but the taste of this magnificent Yorkshirewoman is a trifle naff. This year the card is neither Christmassy nor identifiable as the Palace of Westminster—it looks like a neglected corner of Hampton Court on a bad day. But I am stuck: I have to buy some. So I compromise with 200 and get the rest from the National Asthma

Campaign or the National Gallery—which are fiendishly expensive but lovely.

Some frazzled MPs discover Christmas is the moment when we realise we hardly recognise our children, and vice versa. Embarrassment lurks for the unwary. One year my student daughter invited a boyfriend. The poor boy was, as I had predicted, terrified of the Currie clan en masse and didn't relax for a minute. I put on a huge spread, not least to impress the visitor. As Christmas dinner finished I asked the silent youth (who had eaten a lot) if he had enjoyed it. He sighed theatrically and replied: "It were gorgeous." My daughter can't cook to save her life. The relationship broke up soon after.

In non-election years MPs can skedaddle with an easy conscience. I have not the least doubt that even this year in the week after Noël several Select Committees will be abroad on fact-finding tours, naturally somewhere warmer and sunnier than England. I could never figure out why, since they spend so many hours check by jowl all term, MPs choose to dissipate their precious spare time with each other.

It was more understandable in Cecil Parkinson's case as he joined the Lords and Commons ski team against Swiss parliamentarians in Davos. He took his secretary, Miss Keays, along and nobody whispered a dickie bird, not to the press and certainly not to his wife.

In both my parliamentary novels I used the holidays as an opportunity to reveal juicier

aspects of my characters' lives. So while my poor heroine, lonely after her divorce, gets on with a report on the number of mentally ill on our streets, her boss is gallivanting at a party where both drugs and illicit sex make their appearance. (I hasten to add I made it up. Entirely.)

When I sent a draft to my publisher she liked it, but then added: "Can you beef up the orgy scene? Readers like to know what their MPs get up to in private

business made me furious. Not the way to treat women, in my view, even if they adored him. Tucked up in front of a log fire, I wrote a sharply-worded article and faxed it to *The Daily Telegraph*. As soon as it appeared in print, he resigned from ministerial office.

It may be that I have lived a sheltered life, but the temptations to which I've been subjected as an MP have been distinctly limited. Nobody has ever thrust wads of cash at me to ask a question or



CHRISTMAS IS WHEN SOME FRAZZLED MEMBERS REALISE THAT THEY HARDLY RECOGNISE THEIR CHILDREN.

moments." No problem. But I would argue, naturally, that the besmirched reputations of certain Members is not my fault. They didn't need any help in that direction, from me or anyone else.

For myself, I usually do a bunk to our cottage in France at Christmas and catch up with my writing. Three years ago I received a phone call there with the lurid details of Tory Minister Tim Yeo's extramarital activities—scandals like these are apt to seep out at Christmas when the press has fewer parliamentary stories to occupy it and MPs relax their guard.

It transpired that Tim had been by any measure an active laddie, having fathered a child by his girlfriend while yet married. So keen on family values are some chaps that they like to create more than one family. The whole

put down an amendment. The closest came some years ago when a company operating in my area invited my family and me to a fabulous night out at the ballet. The Curries accepted the offer of a box, plus champagne and canapés in the interval, with alacrity, and an only slightly besmirched conscience. The following year my name must have gone into the wrong folder, for the same company invited us to the same production. We declined in disappointment and went to *Scrooge* instead.

In rural France Christmas is not the focus of festive activities, but New Year's Eve is. They call it the feast of Saint Sylvestre. (No, I don't know who he is. Neither do my neighbours. It doesn't seem to matter.) The village *salle des fêtes* will be taken over days before and gaily decorated. Tables are laid for a feast of seven or more courses which will start being served at around 11pm; the coffee and petits fours, if you're still hungry, arrive about 4am. Bottles of local wine appear, are emptied, reappear. Of course, there's an accordion and much bouncy dancing—the hall soon resembles a Beryl Cook painting with fat ladies and red-faced elderly gents cavorting breathlessly amid much laughter. As dawn breaks we stagger out into the darkness. A cock crows. We kiss everybody, on both cheeks, twice, then make our way home.

Back to the grindstone: to the advice bureau, the piles of letters, the endless phone calls, the goldfish bowl. Here's to a happy year. I can't wait.

Edwina Currie's latest novel, "A Woman's Place", is published by Coronet in paperback, at £5.99, and is available on audio tape.



THE NORTH FRONT OF WESTMINSTER HALL BY ROBERT SANDRY

CONSTITUENTS EXPECT TO RECEIVE THE OFFICIAL HOUSE OF COMMONS CHRISTMAS CARD; SOME COLLECT THEM YEAR BY YEAR.

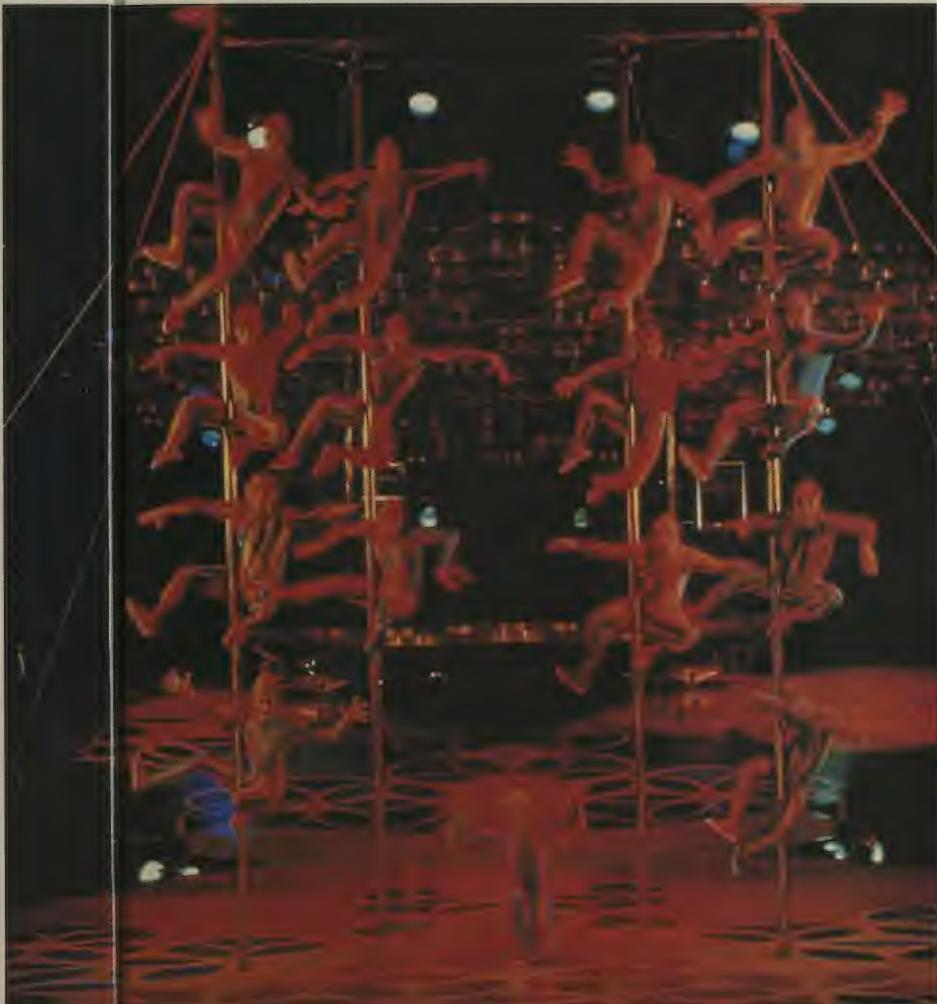
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It's the little things
that count



A revolution is happening
inside the Big Top.
Today's circus crowds gasp
in astonishment, not at
performing animals but at a
new breed of brilliantly
choreographed gymnasts
whose dazzling daring,
says Christopher Bowen, is
simply breathtaking.

THE NEW RING MASTERS





Why was it that the circuses of my youth always seemed to promise more than they delivered? Was it, perhaps, because my first encounters with the Big Top were via cinemascopic images of Barnum and Bailey, *Dumbo* and *The Greatest Show on Earth*; of Burt Lancaster and Gina Lollobrigida "Going for the triple"? From the cocoon of darkness, those Technicolor, canvas palaces appeared to be populated by the most exotic creatures on earth: heroes like Tony Curtis and Kirk Douglas, glamorous women who looked like Claudia Cardinale or sang like Ethel Merman. Later, when the circus caravan rolled into my town and I came face to face with the real thing, I could only feel let down.

What was it about touring British circuses in the early 1960s that made them so depressing? Was it just the scratchy bands, piping tunelessly away on the sidelines, the mangy old lions with a tranquilliser habit, the dipso clowns, the lacklustre aerialists who seldom drew a gasp from the crowd? Or were we merely witnessing the death-throes of an art form that simply couldn't compete with the advances in entertainment technology? Certainly, when circus and television collided, in those drearily

inevitable bank holiday broadcasts, the new medium did little to serve the old. No wonder audiences fell away and the touring troupes declined.

But, says Philip Gandey, the circus did not die; it merely paused to draw breath before metamorphosing into a myriad styles and forms. Gandey is co-creator and director of Cirque Surreal, Britain's first large-scale contemporary "concept" circus which made its debut last year. At the age of 17 he became Europe's youngest-ever circus director and, together with his wife Carol, he now heads one of the world's largest big-top entertainment groups. They were the team who brought the Russian Circus on Ice to Britain, as well as the hugely popular Chinese State Circus, and it is this diversity of styles, says Gandey, which has helped to bring the crowds back.

More importantly, however, has been the movement away from using animals. Although many traditional circus families—and some audiences—still regret the demise of animal acts, there is a general awareness that performing animals are a morally dubious source of entertainment, and few local authorities in Britain will license such troupes. Indeed, there are many countries throughout the world where the practice is banned completely.

Above, a gravity-defying feat from the Gandini Juggling Project, the company founded by a juggler and a gymnast.

Right, Cirque Surreal, Britain's first large-scale "concept" circus.

Previous pages, a dazzling display by the Montreal-based Cirque du Soleil in which the troupe shin up a forest of poles and hang like flags flapping in the breeze.





Left and right, two of the bouncing, rolling, lumbering figures from Decodex, the latest show created by Philippe Decouflé, the admired French choreographer whose work embodies the spirit of circus in dance.

This has forced circus companies to find alternative ways to entertain the public and many of them have looked to the world of theatre and dance to lend substance and flesh out the mysterious, fantasy element traditionally provided by animals.

"It wasn't just a case of replacing animals with new acts," says Gandey. "The profession had to find other production values, whether in the aesthetics of Cirque du Soleil, the shock value of Archaos, or the culture and tradition of the Chinese State Circus. It isn't enough to bring together a ringmaster and a set of acts and present them in the same way as before."

As Gandey points out, one of the most acclaimed troupes to adopt this approach is the Montreal-based Cirque du Soleil. As its name implies, this is a circus with everything under the sun—everything, that is, except animals—as London audiences saw when the company brought its spectacular *Saltimbanco* to the Royal Albert Hall last winter. But who needs juggling seals and dancing elephants with the 50-plus human performers in this extraordinary entertainment to dazzle the senses?

For those who admire traditional circus skills there is plenty to marvel at in *Saltimbanco*; hand-to-hand duo Marco and Paulo Lorador—beefcake sensations of last year's

Royal Variety Performance—are as strong as they are awesomely proportioned, while Jingmin Wang's split-jumps and back somersaults off a tall unicycle would be impressive enough on the ground, let alone on the high wire where she performs her precision-engineered stunts to heart-stopping effect. There is immense talent in the house troupe who shimmy up a forest of poles and hang horizontally out like flags flapping in the breeze, or plunge from the lighting rig in a synchronised bungee ballet of quite breathtaking beauty.

But there are other, more quietly surreal sights: the Tchelnokov Family, a gymnastic trio of father, mother and son who bend themselves into untenable shapes and roll each other around like so many hula-hoops, and Guennadi Tchijov, a rank and raucous prankster of a clown with pot belly and tail. It is he, and his gaggle of punkish acolytes, who provide continuity and give *Saltimbanco* (an Italian term for street entertainer) its slightly disquieting Fellini-esque edge. And they also serve to remind us that however modern the setting or contemporary the new-agey rock score, the spirit evoked by this human zoo is ancient.

Cirque du Soleil started 11 years ago, when a group of young street performers came together to perform a circus-style

show with original music, costumes and sets for Quebec's 450th-anniversary celebrations. A simple notion, perhaps, but not one which had been successfully tried before. But successful it undoubtedly was in melding the ancient arts of *commedia dell'arte* and circus with contemporary music, choreography, stage and lighting techniques. It also seemed to encompass something peculiar to the Québécois: that sophisticated, "foreign" otherness that separates them from the rest of Canada and North America, yet doesn't quite make them seem European either.

Whatever this peculiar chemistry may be, it has played a large part in making Cirque du Soleil the city of Quebec's most successful cultural export—bigger than theatre guru Robert Lepage or cutting-edge dance sensations La La La Human Steps; more famous, even, than Celine Dion—with three permanent companies employing a total of 600 people on three continents and a permanent show housed on the Las Vegas Strip.

Inevitably, the popularity of Cirque du Soleil has meant that similar groups have sprung up around the world. In France, where the tradition of circus is strong, Cirque Plume and Cirque du Docteur Paradis provide fantasy entertainment on



a grand scale, while Australia's Circus Oz has become as much a cultural ambassador on the international festival circuit as its Québécois counterpart.

And the movement towards circus as an adult, theatrical spectacle has begun to change the face of the British version. Gandy's Cirque Surreal, with its dreamlike plot and commissioned score from rock musician Rick Wakeman, is a far cry from tail-coated ringmasters and clarinet-playing clowns. Smaller-scale ensembles like Burlesque, Mamaloucas and No Fit State can regularly be seen on the British festival circuit. Even Gerry Cottle, doyen of Britain's family circus tradition, has

teamed up with the creators of Archaos to present the Circus of Horrors.

It was the French troupe Archaos, you may remember, who turned the decibel—if not skill—level up a decade or so ago with its heavy-metal, hard-rock approach to circus, substituting motorcycles for horses and topless trapezing for leggy equestriennes. The “dangerous” appeal of Archaos subsided once audiences realised the show was about as dangerous as the rubber teeth on their immobilised chainsaws, but between them Cottle and Archaos-founder Pierrot Bidon have devised a new show with a bit less anarchy and a lot more talent. Presented in a considerably more structured and

controlled way than its predecessors, the Circus of Horrors features a vague plot about a post-apocalyptic city of vampires where monsters and motorcycles roam and an over-sexed Quasimodo chases an anything-but-chaste Esmeralda. Presiding over this self-styled freak show is Doctor Haze, a kitsch old rocker in the tradition of Gary Glitter and Richard O'Brien, who lends more than a touch of Hammer horror to some apparently nasty goings-on.

The Circus of Horrors might be advertised as “not for the squeamish or politically correct” but, as Cottle himself says: “It’s a camp comedy. We’ve been haunted by the word horror in some places. We don’t

allow kids under 10 and we don't really recommend it for under-16s. But it's all tongue-in-cheek."

Schllock-horror aside, the new-found adult appeal of circus has been enhanced more by sophistication than titillation, a factor which owes much to the intervention of choreographers and theatre consultants. All of the major contemporary circuses list a choreographer in their production teams and there is no mistaking the influence of the world of dance on the style and aesthetics of today's circus performers—toes have never been so pointed, muscular arms have never looked so graceful. But it seems that the traffic between these two schools is not entirely one-way.

Dance/theatre companies like The Kosh and Legs on the Wall regularly utilise trapeze and gymnastic skills in the presentation of their in-your-face works; while groups like the Gandini Juggling Project and Momentary Fusion present circus techniques in the most artful of ways, devised—more often than not—with the aid of a choreographer.

Gill Clarke, one of Britain's most talented contemporary dancers—she regularly performs with Siobhan Davies' marvellous company—and a respected choreographer in her own right, has lately embarked on an extraordinary collaboration with the Gandini Juggling Project, a company founded by world-class juggler Sean Gandini and Finnish rhythmic gymnast Kati Yla-Hokkala. Not that good juggling isn't a pleasure to watch in any form; indeed, there is something deeply satisfying about the resounding slap of skin on wood as a twirling club is rescued from its trajectory by a sure hand, or dazzling patterns are formed by multiple objects streaking through space. But under Clarke's inspired direction, Gandini's troupe extend the natural line inherent in the action of throwing and catching into an integrated sequence of arcing limbs and elegant body-swarves. Set to propulsive, textured scores which follow a minimalist aesthetic, the company has produced some mesmerising works which magically combine the controlled dynamic of t'ai chi with the beauty and mathematical precision of baroque.

In a similar vein, Momentary Fusion has transformed trampoline and rope-work techniques into athletic, gravity-defying choreography overlaid with imagery which ranges from the Tudor period to sci-fi fantasy. The most famous exponent of circus-style dance spectacular however, is Philippe Decouflé. The darling of the French contemporary dance scene, this Paris-based choreographer crafted some of the most memorable pop videos of the 1980s—remember New Order's Day-Glo trampolining elves—and achieved international fame as the man who devised the surreal choreography for the opening ceremony of the Albertville Winter Olympics. But it is with his own troupe, Compagnie DCA, that Decouflé truly embodies the spirit of circus in dance. In his latest show, *Decodex*, he populates the theatre with a



fantastic tribe of creatures in latex costumes and rubbery antennae. Bouncing, rolling and lumbering across the stage in fringed flippers, they look more like aliens than human beings, yet there is a sweetly cartoonish quality to their benign cavortings.

It seems that even at the wilder end of the performing arts spectrum, circus has been embraced. In her fringed and beaded bustier, displaying what the publicity breathlessly refers to as "an extravagance of flesh", Rose English looks every inch the glamorous showgirl. Indeed, in her show *My Mathematics*, the woman that festival promoters around the world fondly refer to as "the Queen Mother of performance art", not only portrays Rosita Clavel, an equestrienne ringmaster, her on-stage co-star is Goldie, a pretty palomino stallion.

My Mathematics is a show which—among other things—explores the agenda of co-operation versus coercion implicit in performing with an animal. Although sharing the limelight with a horse, says English, is really no different from working with her two-legged colleagues. "They can be having a great time one day and not want to bother the next." Mind you, actors tend not to throw you off their backs and bite you on the bum as the horse she worked with at the Sydney Festival did a few years ago. "But

Cirque Surreal, with its dream-like plot, is part of the movement that is turning circus into an adult, theatrical spectacle.

then, he was an Australian," says English. Goldie, she assures you, is far less free-range than his Antipodean counterpart.

Everybody, it seems, wants to join the circus these days. And far from being in decline, its practitioners have, in the process of reinvention, developed new skills to dazzle and entice a mass public. "Internationally, this is a very good time for circus," says Charlie Holland, director of the Circus Space in Hackney, Britain's premier training establishment. "With all of this activity going on we are getting a very high standard of applicants, particularly from continental Europe. The skill level has never been higher. Britain lacks a flagship company, but the potential is there. If we had the resources provided in other countries, we'd be flying with the big boys." Backwards and, no doubt, with a twist.

* See That's Entertainment for circus performances.



*Above and right, two of the
nightmarish images
conjured up by the Circus of
Horrors, billed as
"not for the squeamish".*

*Below, some of the
disturbing faces
that confront audiences
at Decodex.*

BELLO DENIS GHAPOUR/LIVE/ENGU FRAND: LEFT AND FAR LEFT STEPHEN SWAN



PHOTOGRAPHS BY RAYAH AND PHOTO RESEARCHERS



HAVE YOURSELF AN ALL AMERICAN CHRISTMAS

This year think festive, think American. Jo Foley brings you transatlantic traditions with bells on.

In a country that has few, if any, fairy tales of its own, America has become adept at adopting those from other cultures. Just look at Walt Disney and his visions of princes and paupers, good and evil, beauty and terror. So it is hardly surprising that America's version and vision of Christmas outstrips most others.

In the United States Christmas is not just for the Christmas season, it is a year-round activity. For wherever you go—no matter how large the city, how quaint the town, how new the shopping mall—you

will find a Christmas shop open throughout the year, dispensing tree decorations, snowstorms, cards and lights. Even if in most countries these days Christmas is little more than a retail opportunity, in the States they retail it properly, they understand it—they invented it. Christmas shops mean that in the middle of July, when swimwear is still on sale, you can buy a cut-price crib, tree-lights at half price or a life-sized Santa for your lawn at discount.

In the UK we have become both ambivalent and half-hearted about Christmas, with embarrassed mumbleings about



its commercialisation, at the same time insisting we are no longer just a Christian culture and should not pay such attention to a festival of only one denomination. And yet the week before Christmas we go crazy, embracing that commercialism with all the vigour our Visa cards can muster and swelling the sound of "Silent Night" with lumps in our throats and tears in our eyes.

The Americans do not suffer from such schizophrenia. They like Christmas, schmaltz and all, and they do not apologise for the planning or the spending. In their own particular parlance they "go for it". Perhaps it is because they have far fewer holidays than we do, and because the country is so vast, they need such excuses for families and friends to gather in celebration. But when Christmas raises its head, they grab it by the throat and enjoy every bit of it. They call it the Christmas holiday

- even though most people are back at work the day after Boxing Day (unlike us).

Planning begins immediately after Thanksgiving—the last Thursday in November. You would think that after so much turkey and trimmings the collective appetite would not be able to swallow more so soon. Wrong! Out come the mixing bowl, the baking pans, the special cookbook by the woman who almost re-invented the whole festival a few years ago—Martha Stewart. Cakes are made, puddings cooked, cookies baked and all are stored or frozen until needed.

Ginger and cinnamon are the two flavours synonymous with the season. Gingerbread cookies, houses, men, angels and stars are all baked and kept for the tree, which they will later decorate. The scent of cinnamon is everywhere—on pastries and muffins, in candles, room sprays and pot

Above, America is not shy about welcoming Santa and his reindeer. You can spot him cavorting across suburban rooftops, on the smartest of lawns, even in the deserts of Nevada and on the beaches of Florida—not to mention in toy-shop windows.

Previous page, if you've got it flaunt it—from the rather elegant nutcracker soldiers and tree (small picture), to the totally over-the-top family home, ablaze with every possible Christmas icon, bringing good cheer to the entire neighbourhood.

Top right, New York, beautiful at any time of year, is particularly so at Christmas. Every office building, bank and department store is festooned with lights, trees, even heralding angels. You can get tiny cribs for window sills and occasional tables, but why not go the whole hog and get the most splendidly ornate one in town, right?



LEFT: PHOTOFEST; DANNY STURGEON; ROBERT DRECHSLER; TOP: PHOTOFEST; BOTTOM: PHOTOFEST





TOP: CHRISTMAS DECORATIONS ARE STORED FROM ONE YEAR TO THE NEXT, AND ARE AUGMENTED ANNUALLY WITH WHATEVER IS THE HOT FAVOURITE OF THE SEASON—BE IT CHINA, LINTERS OR TREE DECORATIONS. SOMETIMES EVEN SPECIAL DRAPES AND CUSHION COVERS ARE ADDED TO IMPART A GREATER FESTIVE FEEL.



Above: favourite Christmas decorations are stored from one year to the next but are augmented annually with whatever is the hot favourite of the season—be it china, linters or tree decorations. Sometimes even special drapes and cushion covers are added to impart a greater festive feel.

pourri, or sprinkled on top of coffee, chocolate or hot toddies. If Christmas has a fragrance, it is cinnamon.

Gradually the accessories of Christmas are produced or purchased. Where we drag out the same decorations year after year, in the States new ones are bought or added to the old. Whereas we have the same battered angel for the top of our tree, they have fashions in theirs. Last year the Battenburg lace fairy topped most trees—some \$2 million dollars worth of her. Where we have just one set of lights (two for a very large tree), the Americans have lights everywhere: on trees and around them, candles in every window, fairy lights up the garden path, lit-up Santas on the roof, reindeer with lighted antlers on the lawn and dazzling angels at the door.

Whether you are in New Jersey, Milwaukee, Palm Beach or Las Vegas the show is

the same. Drive at dusk through any North American neighbourhood in late December, as the lights begin to glow, and it is almost like entering fairytale.

Inside, the story is the same. We are fairly mealy-mouthed about the festivities although we invariably bring out our best china, linen and silver; the Americans, on the other hand, buy special Christmas versions. Each household has its dedicated china and napery, predominately in the Christmas shades of green, gold and red. Where we may have a few candles in the middle of the table, they will have 40 or 50—tall ones in the centre and several votive candles at each place setting. Where we may have a garland or two on the banisters or across a mantelpiece, they will have them swathed around dining chairs, along hallways, across bedposts—even around the dog's collar. We have a wreath on the

front door, in America they will have one on every door. Even the pot-pourri is changed to one comprising dark, carved-wood fruits, gold-sprayed fir cones, cinnamon sticks and deep-red rose petals, all heavily fragranced with winter scents and spiced and heaped into baskets and bowls.

And then there is the tree—tall, wide and every inch, from trunk to tip, decorated with bows, lights, candles and cookies. Around its base there is invariably a skirt. Only the Americans would invent a special garment to hide the bucket in which we base the tree. On a table adjacent to the tree you can often find a Christmas village. Collected by each family over the years, there are miniature houses, churches and figures, painstakingly fashioned and painted, making up an idealised Victorian Christmas. The bells ring out from church steeples, battery-operated skaters move

Above right: Christmas just would not be Christmas without candles. The Americans use millions of them—from tiny ones taken by children to the crib, to the expensive and elaborate ones incorporated in table centrepieces, to the startling simplicity of a Shaker chandelier.

Right: gingerbread is the taste of the American Christmas. Weeks beforehand houses, states, trees and little gingerbread cookies are made and decorated to be hung from trees, served with hot chocolate sprinkled with cinnamon, or filled by tiny, excited fingers awaiting Santa's arrival.



TOP: CHRISTMAS DECORATIONS ARE STORED FROM ONE YEAR TO THE NEXT, AND ARE AUGMENTED ANNUALLY WITH WHATEVER IS THE HOT FAVOURITE OF THE SEASON—BE IT CHINA, LINTERS OR TREE DECORATIONS. SOMETIMES EVEN SPECIAL DRAPES AND CUSHION COVERS ARE ADDED TO IMPART A GREATER FESTIVE FEEL.



FRANK SPONER

Above, the whole world over, Christmas more than anything is for children. But in America they understand that it brings out the child in all of us.

silently across a frozen lake, and there are children on sleds and carol singers. Some homes will have 40 or 50 pieces, which do not come cheap: from \$14 for a small boy and his dog up to \$150 for a church. The villages become family heirlooms and people scour the Christmas shops throughout the year to add to their collection.

It is at the high altar of shopping—New York—where one can observe the American Christmas at its most beguiling. From the first week in December the lights are on and the decorations are put up. The merchandise is in store and the gift-wrapping second to none—even the traditional white ribbon around the pale-blue Tiffany box is swapped to red for the season.

In early December take a late-afternoon walk down Fifth Avenue, listen to the bells and the carol-singers, watch the Santas, gaze at the lights and the windows. Wander into F.A.O. Schwarz for the toys, venture into any of the big department stores and have all your senses assaulted by luxury. One year Henri Bendel's lobby sported a two-storey high Christmas tree decorated only with scented pomanders and baskets of pot-pourri; walking in from the cold air was literally breath-taking. Stroll around the Rockefeller Centre and stop to watch the skaters before taking the lift to the top-floor bar. Order a drink and watch the skyline—even the Empire State Building changes its colours for Christmas.

Such dedication to the festivities brings out the child in all of us. It may be commercialised—but it sure is Christmas *

AMERICA COMES TO LONDON

Hayes Lane, Bromley is not perhaps the first place you'd look for an authentic American Christmas, but every year Terry Harris creates his very own light show USA. From December 1 to New Year's Day his house and garden are ablaze with lit-up reindeer, angels, toy soldiers and—Terry's personal favourite—a giant Santa on a 7-foot long sledge. It all started in 1986 when, on holiday in Florida, Terry was captivated by the exuberant, over-the-top light shows and

brought back three 3-foot white angels, the first of his now 40-strong cast of giant Christmas characters. Terry's Christmas light show has become a tradition, visited by literally thousands every year.

* Create your own American Christmas in London, with authentic accessories from: Jerry's Home Store, 163 Fulham Road, London SW3 (mail order 0171-581 0909). Shaker, 322 King's Road, London SW3 (0171-352 3918; mail order 0171-724 7672).



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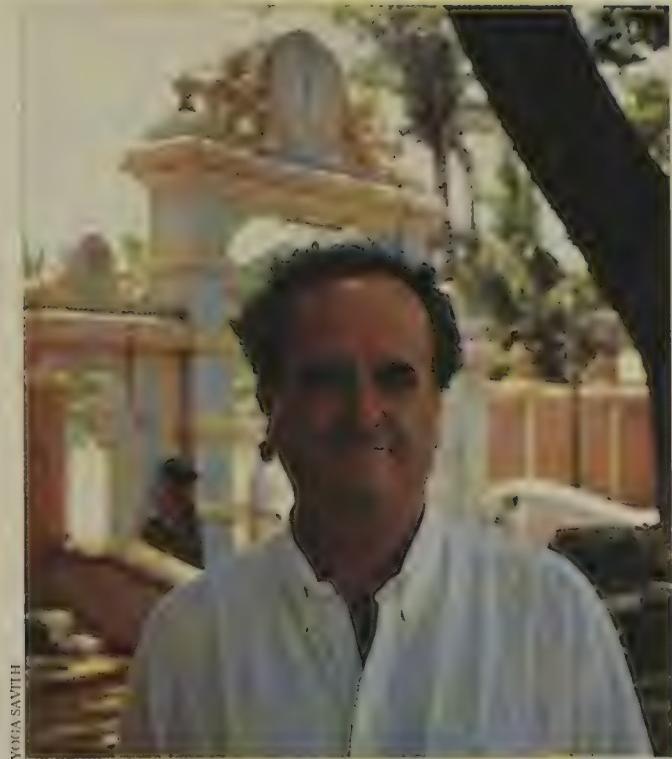
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LIVES OF JESUS

Over the last 25 years an explosion of fascinating new material about Jesus, the man, has resulted in different schools of interpretation, each arguing fiercely that they alone hold the key to understanding Him. Mark Tully, former BBC South Asia correspondent, launched himself into the controversy for a television series to be shown this Christmas.

The birth of Jesus, as celebrated at what we now call Christmas, was a historical event: many sources beyond Christian documents and teaching provide evidence of this. There are, for instance, records from the Roman historians Tacitus and Pliny and the Jewish historian Josephus which also state that Jesus lived. But what more can we know about him than that?

For the last two years I have been trying to sort the historical facts about Jesus from the teaching of the Church, working on a BBC television series which I have called *Lives of Jesus*. I use lives in the plural because

there has been an explosion of scholarly interest over the last 25 years in discovering more about Jesus the man—who he was, what he believed, what he taught and, perhaps most important of all, how he perceived his relationship to God. Fascinating new material has been uncovered, including the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Gospel of St Thomas, while archaeologists have continued their investigations, producing sometimes divergent conclusions about life in first-century Palestine and the religion of Jews at that time.

The study of theology in universities has also broadened and it is no longer a near-

monopoly of the Churches. All the scholars studying the history of Jesus whom I have met, whether clerics or laymen, have insisted that they are historians, uninfluenced by faith, as rigorous in their discipline as those who study any other figure of the past. They are now bringing knowledge gained in other fields to bear on their subject: fresh insights have been acquired from comparative religion, sociology, anthropology, economics and, of course, archaeology. The result of all this scholarly activity has been to produce different schools of interpretation, with their advocates arguing fiercely that they alone hold the key to

understanding Jesus. These divergent theories constitute the *Lives of Jesus*.

During my research, I have gained a much deeper understanding of Jesus' lives and work. In particular I have learnt how many others there were like Jesus in first-century Galilee: prophets, self-proclaimed messiahs, miracle-workers, rebels—call them what you will. Many of them also suffered similar fates to that of Jesus on the cross: Pontius Pilate was known for his brutality. Yet it was Jesus alone who inspired his followers to found the Church. What else can that be called but a miracle? To me, it is the one miracle of which we can be certain, and it is the basis for the myth which is at the heart of Christianity, that God gave his son to die for us.

I use the word "myth" deliberately, for the many years that I have spent working in India have taught me that it does not mean untruth: it is a way of expressing truths which are beyond rational description or explanation. The myths of India—a land of epic heroes and gods active both in heaven and on earth—underpin a civilization far older than our own and still alive today. India is also the land of karma, where one learns to ride with fate, not buck it. I have come to believe we are players dealt a hand of cards. Free will lies in playing the hand well or badly; folly lies in thinking that we can deal our own hand. When, quite out of the blue, the BBC asked me to take on this project, I hesitated. I had never presented a major television series before and had not studied theology for 40 years. But my belief in fate overcame my fears. India had taught me that opportunities did not arise unless they were meant to be taken.

My first task was to read. I began by exploring the recent revival of the search for the historic Jesus, a search that had been abandoned twice previously since scholars felt insufficient facts were obtainable. I read about the recent documents that had been discovered—particularly the Gospel of St Thomas and Dead Sea Scrolls—which portrayed a very different Jesus from the biblical gospels. I learnt that the latter did not reveal, as some have suggested, material damaging to the Church. They do tell us about a sect of Jews about which we previously knew very little, and show that Jesus was not alone in his criticism of the Temple.

There were, I learnt, four streams of scholarship. One upheld the Church's contention that Jesus' contemporaries believed he was divine, one saw Jesus as a Jewish prophet or miracle worker, one saw him as a rebel against the Roman Empire, and the fourth viewed him as a teacher instructing his followers in their personal search for God.

The filming started in Israel, a country I was to visit for the first time. Exploring Jerusalem I was constantly reminded that Jesus had died as a Jew, not as a Christian. Most scholars believe he was crucified because he threatened the Temple, so

"Jerusalem constantly
reminded me that
Jesus died as a Jew."



PHOTOGRAPHS: THE BRIDGEMAN ART LIBRARY

revered that even today its only surviving wall is central to Jewish worship. During my visit the square in front of the wall was packed with families, clapping and ululating as they celebrated bar mitzvahs, marking the coming to manhood of their sons. Black-suited orthodox Jews, with long

curled sideboards emerging from beneath black hats, darted among the crowd to offer help with the ceremonies. Others prayed alone, swaying back

and forth as if in a trance. I imagined the veneration for the Temple 2,000 years ago, and understood the anger of the Jews when Jesus prophesied its destruction.

In Galilee, by the side of the beautiful lake, I realised how the Church had almost obliterated the memory of Jesus the Jew. Here I encountered the Christian Jesus who is now worshipped in the hillside church said to mark the place where he preached the sermon on the mount, and

Above, the birth of Christ and the adoration of the shepherds—one Life of Jesus as seen by Christians.

Scholars of comparative religion have found parallels between the story of the birth of Krishna, the Hindu God, right, and that of Jesus.

the church by the lake where a Franciscan friar told me Jesus had breakfasted with the disciples after the resurrection and established the primacy of Peter by saying to him, "Feed my sheep". But in nearby Capernaum I met a Jewish scholar, David Rosen, who told me that Judaic studies now suggested Jesus could well have been a Pharisee.

This startled me, brought up as I was to believe that the Pharisees were hypocrites, sinners condemned by Jesus. However, Rosen told me that he has studied Jewish texts which have convinced him that there was scant difference between the teaching of Jesus and that of the Pharisees, who were divided and very argumentative. Rosen felt that the criticism of their teaching in the gospels could simply be the result of



disagreements which they and Jesus had among themselves.

It was in Galilee that I also met an orthodox Christian scholar, the Dominican Father Jerome Murphy O'Connor. I had expected a lean, ascetic, priest, white-faced from years spent in the library of Jerusalem's French Bible School. I found instead a large, ruddy-complexioned, priest who had lost none of his Irish sense of humour or zest for life. He was the first to explain the importance of the cities that had been built by the occupying Romans in Galilee during the time of Jesus, and their impact on the region's economy.

Father Jerry took me back to the controversy about where Jesus was born. He told me that economic history might well support Matthew's statement that Bethlehem, not Nazareth, was Joseph and Mary's original home. He pointed out that when Jesus was a child, Sepphoris, the capital of Galilee, was being rebuilt following its destruction in 4BC. Father Jerry thought that Joseph might have left Bethlehem in order to get work on the reconstruction at Sepphoris. Nazareth, only an hour's walk from Sepphoris, "would have served as a base for respectable married men who didn't want their wives and children in a big McAlpine camp, because you would have

had very rough eggs there from all over the Roman Empire." Father Jerry thought that Joseph was probably more of a small-town general builder than strictly a carpenter—a man who could turn his hand to anything. He believed it was important to understand that Jesus was not brought up in some remote rural backwater. There would have been engineers from Rome, decorators from Italy and artists from Greece working on the rebuilding of Sepphoris. Everyone's second language would have been Greek. That, Father Jerry believes, was reflected in the way Jesus used Greek words such as "hypocrite".

In the amphitheatre of the Roman city at Beth Shean I met Professor Richard Horsley, an American scholar, who told me the excavations of archaeologists, still going on around us, showed that the building of the Roman cities had drained the resources of Galilee. This resulted in an economic crisis among the peasantry, driving many of them into debt and destitution. The people of Galilee laboured under the burden of three taxes, one levied by the Romans, one by the king, and one by the Temple authorities in Jerusalem. Professor Horsley told me he thought that debts may have rendered Joseph and his family downwardly mobile, and therefore particularly sensitive

to social injustice. Basing his research on the writings of Josephus and other documents throwing light on society at that time, Professor Horsley said economic history now indicated that Jesus was a rebel who urged the peasants of Galilee to stand together against the Romans and their client kings, the Herods, who were bleeding them dry.

My search for Jesus now took me to Rome, and it was in the darkness of the catacombs that Dominic Crossan, another American scholar, explained how economic history and anthropology indicated that Jesus was a peasant concerned with the everyday wellbeing of those around him. For this Jesus, God was one of justice on this earth—radical economic justice. Crossan showed me pictures painted on the walls of Jesus healing and Jesus eating meals. Although the early Christians buried their dead in the catacombs there were no pictures of the Crucifixion or Resurrection. Even at the time of burial their thoughts were not of the after-life. Dominic Crossan believes that this supports the view that the early Roman Christians saw Jesus as a healer, a God who cared for them in this life. He explained, "In the Lord's prayer Jesus says 'Thy Kingdom come on earth as in heaven'. In other words: heaven is in great shape, it's



the earth that's a mess. It is God's will for earth that is the Kingdom of God."

There are many Christians today who see Jesus as a God of social justice, a rebel fighting economic oppression. This view has inspired "liberation theology", as practised by Catholic priests working among the poor in Latin America who advocate a radical reordering of the world's economy in favour of the oppressed. It reminds me of the Church of England's report *Faith in the City*, described by one of Margaret Thatcher's cabinet colleagues as "pure Marxist theology". However, I found the concept of Jesus the Rebel too limited. I could hardly believe that a mere rebel, after a failed revolt and state execution, would have been venerated as divine—as described in one of St Paul's Epistles—so soon after his death.

My quest now took me back to India. It was here that I learnt how studies in comparative religion show that it was not unusual for Jesus' followers to believe he was God—Jesus might well have proclaimed his own divinity. Hinduism, with its many manifestations of God, its exotic idols, its lack of doctrine, would seem to be about as far removed from Christianity as is possible. Yet Ursula King, a German Catholic scholar who studied in India and then taught in Britain, explained to me how

the Hindu approach to God had much in common with Christianity. In one of the pillared halls of a South Indian temple she mused, "The God Vishnu is at the centre of this temple and when Hindus come to pray before his image, it's much as if they were entering a Catholic Church and finding God hidden in the tabernacle above the altar." I was reminded of an Indian Catholic priest who once told me that although his family had been Christians for generations and he had been through the full rigours of a Jesuit training he still, in his heart of hearts, felt closer to the God Krishna than to Jesus.

Ursula King pointed out that there were many parallels between the stories surrounding the birth of Jesus and the Krishna nativity legends. Krishna's birth was accompanied by extraordinary signs: a tyrant tried to kill him, his mother and his father realised that he was divine. She went on to say, "There is a similar pattern in extraordinariness of Jesus and Krishna—the breaking of all boundaries so that within the human there is more than the human."

Near the Indian city of Bangalore I sat with thousands of people from all over the world waiting patiently for a darshan, or audience, with Sai Baba, the man they believe is God. As the tiny, frail figure dressed in flowing saffron robes almost floated round the hall, I thought, the devotees striving to look into his eyes are such ordinary people. This is not a gathering of

freaks. If they can believe Sai Baba is God why should Jesus' followers not have believed likewise?

There was one last Life of Jesus I had to investigate—as revealed in the Gospel of St Thomas. To find it I had to go to Egypt, where the Gospel was discovered. There I met another American scholar, Marvin Meyer, who had been studying sayings attributed to Jesus. This Jesus, explained Meyer, "performed no miracles, revealed no fulfilment of prophecy, announced no

Kingdom to come which would disrupt world order, and died for no one's sin."

This may have been Jesus the teacher of wisdom, who inspired the Desert Fathers of the fourth century to retreat to the Egyptian desert and perform amazing feats of asceticism in order to discover him. Ignoring, though not rejecting, the Church, the Desert Fathers sought their own

individual relationship with Jesus.

At St Catharine's Monastery deep in the Sinai desert I met an Englishwoman, Emma Loveridge, who arranges tours for today's pilgrims in search of a Jesus who will bring meaning to their lives. She said, "The pilgrims who come here want to discover their inner selves. Many seem to feel a lack of a spiritual life in Western countries."

As my search draws to a close, I am convinced that Jesus was much more than a Jewish holy man, a rebel, or a teacher. Jesus died as a Jew yet gave birth to Christianity—that for me is a miracle which no historian can deny. From the unpromising beginning of the execution of a "criminal" with a following of Galilean peasants emerged a religion which was to be adopted by the Roman Empire and to become the foundation stone of Western civilization. Furthermore I am certain that the key lies in the Resurrection. I have been convinced by the American scholar Ed Sanders who told me, "The Resurrection was absolutely necessary for Christianity, it made the Christian faith happen." It must surely have been the events which followed Jesus' death which brought his frightened followers together again, which inspired them to found the Church and to lay down their lives for it.

My search could not reveal exactly what happened, but it convinced me that something did, something that convinced the followers of Jesus that he was God. And it was this that gave birth to the myth that lives on, 2,000 years after his death.

If present-day
followers of Sai Baba
in India believe
that he is God, why
should followers of
Jesus not have believed
likewise?

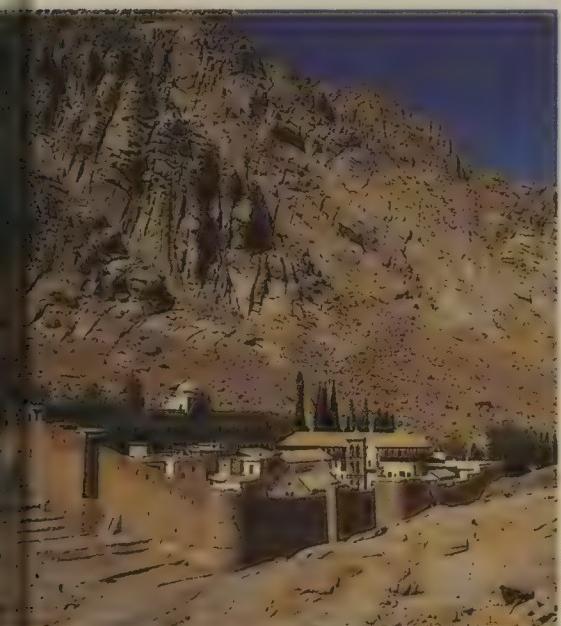
Far left, Mark Tully adopts an ancient mode of travel to explore the Middle Eastern deserts in his quest to uncover the Lives of Jesus. His search began in Jerusalem, far left top, and most scholars believe that Jesus was crucified because he threatened the Temple, so revered that today its only remaining wall is still central to Judaism.

Far left below, comparative religion scholar Ursula King pointed out that there were many parallels between the stories of the birth of Jesus and that of Krishna, the Hindu God.

Centre top, the search goes to Egypt. A fresco of Christ from the Coptic Monastery of the Syrians in Wadi el Natrun and, left top, St Catherine's monastery in the Sinai Desert. These monasteries reveal a Jesus who inspired the Desert Fathers to perform feats of asceticism to discover God in a personal way rather than through the Church.

Left below, Mark Tully with Professor Dominic Crossan at the catacombs in Rome where early Christian art depicts a Jesus who is a healer and is concerned with justice in this world, rather than in an afterlife; and, centre below, with scholar David Rosen who claims that study of Judaic texts suggests that Jesus was one of the despised Pharisees.

* *Lives of Jesus*, a four-part television series, will be shown shortly before Christmas on BBC1. A book of the same title written by Mark Tully accompanies the programmes, priced £17.99 published by BBC Books (ref no 0563 37148X, to order please see page 90).



ROBERT ODEA



PHOTOGRAPHS: BBC/ANGELA THYB; BILL ROBINSON

CAPITAL CATS

AT CHRISTMAS



London has an army of working cats who keep the capital in good order according to their own exacting standards. Dedicated and dutiful, each one will, to a tabby, be manning their posts without a miaow of dissatisfaction even on Christmas Day.

Gregory Holyoake padded along to meet them.

The capital simply teems with cats—pampered pets, starving strays and ferocious ferals—which frequent the most surprising places, from city farms to public schools. And, although London may be the only place where cats cannot look at a queen (none resides at either Buckingham Palace or Clarence House), staff admit to feeding them at Hampton Court and Kew palaces.

Cats have always been part of London's folklore. Dick Whittington's faithful companion is associated with Highgate Hill from where, according to pantomime, the three-times Lord Mayor was summoned by the city bells. All the heroes of T.S. Eliot's *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats* inhabit specific areas of the metropolis: Growltiger, the barge cat, travels along the Thames from Hammersmith to Rotherhithe; Mungojerrie and Rumpelteazer, the acrobatic pair, operate around fashionable Kensington; while the portly toff, Bustopher Jones, patronises "eight or nine" clubs around St James's.

Many real cats that have stalked London have also passed into legend. The plump cat which patrolled the platforms at Paddington station was for a time commemorated by a brass plaque in the ladies' loo; the former feline employee of the Bank of England in Threadneedle Street

features in G.E. Hicks' oil painting *Dividend Day* at the Bank; while Binks, the celebrated puss who earlier this century took up residence at Bates', the hatters, in Jermyn Street, appears stuffed and mounted on the mahogany shelves among the trilbies, bowlers and panamas. Binks still sports a topper and smokes a cheroot as—according to photographs—she did in real life.

Today the majority of cats who inhabit London's public places are rescue cats who are expected to work for their keep. Jobs vary, from welcoming guests at hotels to controlling rodents in theatres, although strangely none is employed backstage at *Cats* nor at *The Mousetrap*.

At Christmas, however, capital cats generally take time off to join in the festivities with their host families. There is invariably a present for them hidden among the parcels.

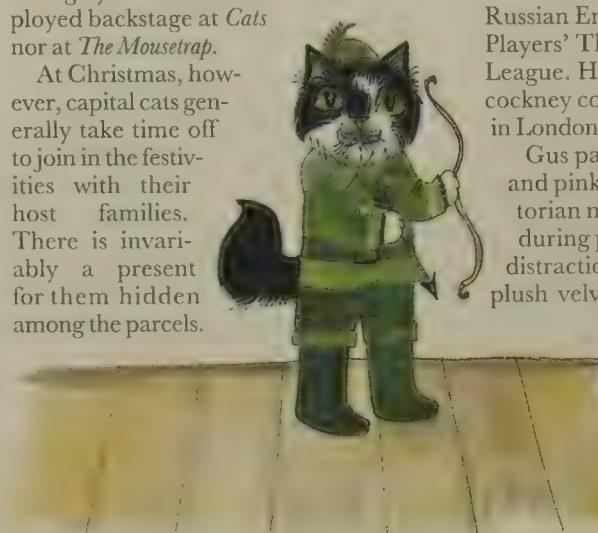
Harrods will supply everything from cheap clockwork mice to jewelled pet baskets costing thousands of pounds, although these are often shunned by the recipients in favour of discarded wrapping paper and ribbons, which afford hours of amusement.

A Smoothie with a Past

Gus is the music hall cat whose haunt is the Players' Theatre, which is located underneath the arches of Charing Cross railway station. He is a portly, black and white gentleman with a secret past: he was originally found wandering in the grounds of the Russian Embassy and was adopted by the Players' Theatre via the Cats' Protection League. He is named after Gus Elan, the cockney comedian who was top of the bill in London's Victorian music halls.

Gus patrols the dressing rooms, stage and pink auditorium of the replica Victorian music hall, but he is ushered out during performances, as he might be a distraction. When resting, he occupies a plush velvet chaise-longue in the foyer, from where he grandly welcomes patrons.

Over the years Gus has made the acquaintance of a variety of artistes including Peter Ustinov, Prunella Scales and Clive Dunn. And he was





once part of a double act with a female feline, Florrie (named after another popular entertainer, Florrie Ford). "Like most actresses," whispers box office manager, Peter Button, "she was much older than she let on, and passed into gentle retirement several years ago."

Meeters and Greeters

Spencer and Churchill are two superb cats who inhabit the elegant Pembridge Court Hotel in Notting Hill. They are plump, sociable and smart, with white bib and paws, and a stripy tail. Churchill, who has the creamier coat, is a ginger tom; Spencer—unusually—a ginger queen.

The small, family-run hotel recognises that visitors to London often miss their pets, which is why the two cats play an important role in making them feel at home at Pembridge Court. "Guests are welcome to bring their own animals, of course," says hotel manager Valerie Gilliat. "But if this is not possible, Spencer and Churchill will willingly sleep on their beds." Spencer permanently sits on the reception desk to welcome visitors but Churchill takes it upon himself to show them to their rooms—often via the lift!

Both cats insist on joining in the family festivities and will scratch on the door if inadvertently left out of party games or carol concerts. They are looking forward to a Christmas dinner which will include prawns and chicken.

Each year the Pembridge Court commissions an artist to design a Christmas card caricaturing the staff in a traditional setting—carol singing, in a pantomime or on a London omnibus. The cats feature large, and last year were shown in a Victorian ballroom with Churchill swinging on a chandelier and Spencer dressed in a frilly gown whizzing down the bannisters.

Snow White

Boris is a pure white cat living with Canon John Halliburton and his family in their 17th-century terraced house in Amen Court, within the sound of the bells of St Paul's Cathedral. As Chancellor, Canon Halliburton is responsible for the valuable Cathedral library and although Boris declines to attend services, he sometimes strays as far as St Paul's to investigate the churchyard.

"At night the City is very quiet," says Jenny, the Canon's wife, "and Boris often gives people a fright when he appears, like a ghostly spectre, in the moonlight. He is much more difficult to spot, of course, when it snows . . ." On



Spencer and Churchill are the resident cats at the Pembridge Court Hotel in Notting Hill, London. They welcome guests from the vantage point of the reception desk and do their best to make them feel at home.

Christmas morning, while the family attends divine service, Boris will nose under the tree and leave a trail of torn wrapping paper after unsuccessful attempts to locate his present—cat treats or a clockwork mouse. "A rescue dog we once fostered was far worse," concedes Jenny. "He ripped up an entire Advent calendar in a determined endeavour to find the chocolate figures concealed inside."

Pigeon Fanciers

The Barbican Underground station has two cats: Barbie (named after the station, not the doll), who is a tabby, and Pebbles, a long-haired black and white. They have been there for about eight years and have very different backgrounds. Pebbles was given by a neighbouring air stewardess when she emigrated, and Barbie was dumped anonymously at the station and is consequently more timorous.

Pebbles surprises everyone by sleeping through the rush hour, and even at peak periods he can be found catnapping on the gates. Both cats have access to an outside terrace, where they live in cardboard boxes packed with newspaper.

The Barbican cats have become famous through their appearances in newspapers and on television and they are popular with commuters. "If we lost them there would be an outcry," says station supervisor, Mick O'Sullivan. "And they do an excellent job of keeping the platforms free of pigeons."

At Christmas Barbie and Pebbles hang up their stockings in the booking hall for residents from the Barbican flats to donate tins of food and cat toys. They chase

round the station playing with the garlands or attack the Christmas tree. "In return we can expect a present of a mouse or two," laughs Mick O'Sullivan.

Happily Ever After

The Whittington Hospital occupies the site on Highgate Hill where pantomime character Dick Whittington supposedly heard the bells of London telling him to return to seek fame and fortune. The hospital not only sports a cat as its logo, but has a real-life moggy as its mascot—Meow-Meow.

Fifteen years ago a bedraggled tortoise-shell arrived at the hospital seeking shelter. She promptly gave birth to a litter of kittens, which were all happily fostered by the nursing staff. One official, a true pantomime villain, ordered the cat to leave, but a fairy godmother in the form of Peggy Theophile, a kind switchboard operator, alerted the media to this harsh decision and Meow-Meow was allowed to stay.

Recently, in a reenactment of the panto story, Meow-Meow met the Lord Mayor of London, when he opened the hospital's new Maternity Wing. Unlike the cat in the fairy tale, however, Meow-Meow refused to play loyal companion. When His Lordship tried to stroke her, she bit him.

Mighty Mousers

Bridget and Gladys are two lucky black cats who roam freely on Tower Bridge. The sisters are four years old and were named after the sailing barges that pass most frequently through the bridge.

London's river presents a huge rodent problem, so there have been cats at Tower Bridge since its opening in 1894. Bridget and Gladys are on the payroll of the Corporation of London, "When they arrived we kept a diary, and in the first month they caught 27 mice," says retail manager Linda Foster proudly. "That proved they were worth their keep." Linda is responsible for

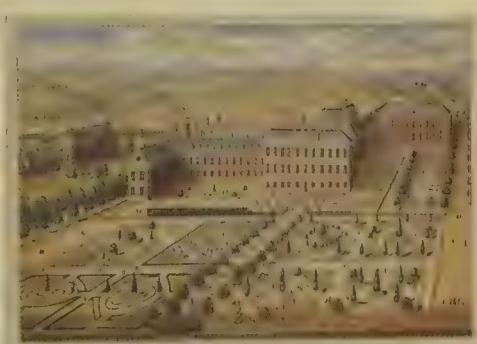
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It is fascinating to see these famous palaces in the rural settings of the 18th century, with the formal parterre gardens and the complete absence of urban development before the Industrial Revolution. Note the landscape behind Kensington Palace, not a building in sight. See how the formal gardens of Windsor Castle stretch right down to the river where the railway station now stands and notice the deer in St James' Park and the sedan chair being carried between the trees in what is now the Mall.

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the bridge cats and says they live a life of luxury. Gladys is shy and hides away from the public but Bridget is more affable and tends to stay close to home. "She lost her spirit of adventure when she strayed and hurt her tail in a traffic accident."

At Christmas the cats join the staff party. They relax among people they know and will even wear tinsel crowns. But there is one stranger that they both look forward to meeting each year. Father Christmas sets up his grotto in the gift shop and there is usually a treat or two for Bridget and Gladys at the bottom of Santa's sack.

First Cat

Humphrey, the Downing Street cat, is named after Sir Humphrey Appleby, the fictional Permanent Secretary of the popular BBC TV series *Yes, Minister*. He is approximately seven years old and arrived as a stray in 1990, when he was immediately adopted as official mouser. He is a fluffy black and white cat with a gentle nature and is looked after by clerical staff.

There has been a history of Cabinet Office and Treasury cats since the reign of King Henry VIII and Humphrey entered the limelight recently when he went missing and his obituary was printed in *The Times*. Happily, his photograph was recognised by the policeman who had taken him in at the Royal Army Medical College, Millbank, and he was soon reunited with his friends at the Cabinet Office. Humphrey rubs shoulders with Prime

Humphrey, the Downing Street cat, moves in elevated political circles.

Ministers, heads of state and royalty, although any private conversation with diplomats is subject to the Official Secrets Act. And as he is specifically the office cat, if there is a change of government he will remain at No10.

Last year Humphrey had his portrait painted by an artist admirer and he pawed his autobiography, which was a bestseller over the Christmas period. This year he is dreaming not of a white Christmas but of a taste of seasonal turkey, overseas greetings from his counterpart, Socks, the Clinton's family cat at the White House, and—who knows?—maybe even a mention in the New Year's Honours List.

Stable Relationship

Shoreditch police station employs two cats, Jack and Vera, at the stables behind the famous Eagle Tavern in City Road. "There is always the risk of rodents in forage barns," explains PC Haywood-Percival, "and each delivery of hay and straw will bring a country mouse." Consequently, cats are now gainfully employed in the 12

stables of the Metropolitan Mounted Police.

Police Cats Jack and Vera (named after the landlords of The Rover's Return in *Coronation Street*) came to Shoreditch as kittens four years ago, and their beat is the compact stables, where they are tolerated by the horses. PC Jack, a lopsided black and white cat, with bandy legs and a protruding tooth, enjoys exploring the tack room, while his timid sister, WPC Vera, a tabby and white, snuggles down among the bales in the stalls.

At Christmas local children and old ladies bring gifts of a bag of carrots or sugar lumps for the horses and maybe a tin of salmon for the cats. In past years the stables have been emptied for a midnight disco, at which Jack scrounges titbits. But when it turns chilly he climbs the ladder to the loft and falls asleep in the hay.

Popcorn Patrol

The Curzon cinema in Shaftesbury Avenue is patrolled by Flicks, a small, sleek, affectionate, jet black cat. "Like all London cinemas, we had a big problem with rodents," says manager Ron Reeves, "and we lost a fortune in foodstock from the kiosk. Pest control services are expensive so we decided the simple answer was to get a cat, and since April, when we acquired Flicks, we've not lost one bag of popcorn."

Flicks was a rescue cat provided by the Cats' Protection League. She has been so successful at catching mice that the Mayfair Group has now employed a cat in each of its West End cinemas and theatres. Flicks' work begins in earnest at night. She patrols the corridors and auditorium of the vast cinema, chasing round the tip-up seats in search of mice. For this she receives a special allowance from petty cash.

How will Flicks spend her first Christmas at the Curzon? "Working," insists the manager. "She will have special food delivered and maybe cat toys, but there is still a job to be done, even though we're closed on Christmas Day."

Miaow, miaow, Cap'n!

It's Christmas Ahoy for Acting Seacats Jack Tar and Jenny Wren, recently piped aboard HMS *Belfast*, the World War II cruiser permanently moored in the Pool of London near Tower Bridge. The historic ship has a tradition of cats among the crew,



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and when on active service in the Arctic, her three cats, unaccustomed to the rolling of the ship, slept in miniature hammocks.

Jack Tar is extremely shy and avoids tourists, but at nighttime he patrols the seven decks with the watchman, on the look-out for rodents. His mother, Jenny Wren, is more sociable, but when off duty, sleeps in her own cabin. They both wear silver discs engraved Ship's Cat, and receive generous rations from the victualling store.

"Neither cat is a pet," emphasises education officer, Sarah Hogben. "They are working animals." Over Christmas a skeleton crew remains on board and Jack and Jenny will still be required to scour the decks for stowaways.

Poor Kitties

Since 1871 Battersea Dogs' Home has also accommodated cats, and the original cattery, a listed building, is soon to become a museum. Recently the annual number of



FOR CONNOISSEUR CATS

What does the London aristocat do at Christmas? Why, he repairs to the country, of course. A host of rural cat hotels await his arrival, ready with a cat-ologue of treats.

Peel me a sardine... The Risedon Cat Hotel, set in the fields of Kent, offers the ultimate in pampered Christmases. The owner, Mrs Veronica Stacey, realises that people feel guilty about deserting their cats at this time of year and does her utmost to make sure they have a special time too.

Your feline friend can open your Christmas present and one from Mrs Stacey in the comfort of one of 20 individual wooden cat houses all decorated with a pale yellow interior. On Christmas Day Mrs Stacey makes sure that pets relax completely and enjoy their stay. A Christmas stocking is filled with their favourite biscuits, which they can have as an appetiser before their main meal of turkey. When their hearts and stomachs are content, they can drift off for a catnap on a heated bed, to the sound of carols on the radio. Risedon Cat Hotel: 01580 211239

There is a Santa Claws! The Blue Grass Animal Hotel in Cheshire, offers the luxury break your feline friend deserves. An à la carte menu, 24-hour room service and executive suites will tempt you to book in too, but the hotel's founder, Mrs Eileen Kilcourse says: "Sorry, we can accommodate only your pet."

On arrival a bellboy, dressed in a gold-buttoned blue uniform and pillbox hat, welcomes you to the hotel and carries any luggage to your chosen apartment. These sophisticated chambers are split-level for added space with a verandah and play area, allowing your precious pet to relax to the full.

The choice of accommodation depends upon the type of cat you have. The Royal Suite welcomes the aristocrat with a cat-sized brass bed, while the wilder cat can enjoy a stay in the

felines brought to the home peaked at 1,000, and there are never fewer than 100 cats awaiting owners. This alarming figure, however, does not reflect a cruel society insists promotions officer Shirley Piotrowski—the majority are strays.

Cats—tactfully referred to as gifts—may be brought to the home for a variety of reasons. "Elderly people may no longer be able to care for their pets, for example, or perhaps a person is going into hospital for a long time," says Shirley.

This winter cats at Battersea are enjoying their new landscaped cattery, which includes pens with long runs and trees to climb. Friends donate money for special toys at Christmas or knit blankets, which the cats appreciate.

There are two house cats that permanently inhabit Shirley's crowded office. Tiger is a striped tabby who catnaps on top of the filing cabinets. He was brought in by police when his owner was arrested and imprisoned. It must have been a long sentence: Tiger has been at Battersea for more than 15 years.

Poppy, a smaller, inquisitive tabby, is Shirley's favourite. "She is quite courageous and tends to boss the dogs about," laughs Shirley. "She can also be destructive and wreaks havoc with papers



PHOTOGRAPH BY GREGORY HOLYOAKE

Acting Seacat Jenny Wren keeps watch from a porthole of HMS Belfast in the Pool of London.

in my office, if given half a chance," which is why Shirley hangs Christmas cards well out of reach, while Poppy is allowed to enjoy the festive season in her own way by happily shredding all the envelopes. ♦

Safari Suite which is decorated throughout in fake leopardskin.

And, of course, Santa delivers your favourite feline's present on Christmas morning. Blue Grass Animal Hotel: 01606 891303

Must scat, time for my pedicure! The Triple 'A' Animal Hotel and Care Centre in Tyne and Wear has had 14 years of practice in giving the best cat care. Former nurse Ann Adlington runs the centre to give your cat special attention, especially at Christmas when its routine can be disrupted by the festivities. Fourteen members of staff work from 4am to 10pm to give care and cuddles throughout the celebrations. Your pet, just like a child, is kept busy, to alleviate the stress of a new environment.

The centre offers 3-star, 5-star and luxury apartments with outside sun terraces. As part of the Christmas decorations the cats have their own tree covered in fish-shaped treats which are given as snacks. The fun begins on Christmas Eve with Santa putting up stockings filled with toys that are designed to be educational and occupational. As a treat for Christmas Day, your precious pet is pampered, preened and pedicured by the grooming parlour, to make them feel extra special. Triple 'A' Animal Hotel and Care Centre: 0191-537 1344

One's off on one's hols Barkingham Palace is a new cattery in the Derbyshire countryside, surrounded by 12 acres of woodland. Neil Pilkington recently opened this animal hotel for connoisseur cats who need a quality break while their owners are away.

Your pet can enjoy two-level accommodation that is carpeted, heated and has a picture of a comical cat on the wall. They can relax on four-poster, heated beds to the sound of Classic FM. Mr Pilkington wants the animals to feel at home and that includes giving them lots of tender loving care.

Over the Christmas period cats enjoy the festive spirit. There are decorations and turkey for those who can eat cooked meat, and there may also be a surprise stocking for your dear cat. Barkingham Palace: 01332 880693



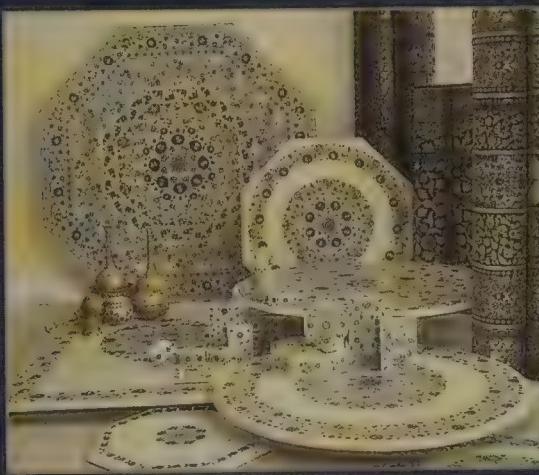
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A SUPERSTAR IS REBORN

George Perry heralds the return of the rock opera *Jesus Christ Superstar* opening shortly at the restored Lyceum Theatre.



The Apostles cry eagerly: "What's the buzz? Tell me what's happening". The "buzz" turns out to be that Jesus is back on the boards of a West End stage. Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice's renowned rock opera *Jesus Christ Superstar*, which enjoyed the then longest-ever run for a London musical when it closed at the Palace in 1980, has returned in an entirely regenerated production.

Its new venue is the Lyceum, one of the finest of all the West End theatres, sited just off the Strand, its imposing classical portico of 1834 commanding a view of Waterloo Bridge and the Aldwych. A couple of

generations at least have passed since the Lyceum was last a proper theatre. It closed in 1959, shortly before the outbreak of World War II, and for many of the intervening years the damaged building earned its living as a dance hall, an unworthy fate for the site of the triumphant reign from 1817 to 1904 of the greatest of all actors-managers, Sir Henry Irving.

Thankfully the Apollo Leisure group has spent £15 million on the theatre's restoration, putting back the gilt and plush of the 2,000-seat Edwardian auditorium, including 7-foot-high golden cherubs and a hand-painted ceiling. The new stage will be one of the largest in London and the

orchestra pit has room for 100 players. The choice of the Lyceum as the home for the new *Jesus Christ Superstar* has a certain irony. Much of the West End is already dedicated to the musicals of Lloyd Webber, together with one or two others such as *Les Misérables* and *Miss Saigon*. The original *Jesus Christ Superstar* set a precedent for monopolising one house for years on end, but often then *Cats* at the New London, *Starlight Express* at the Apollo Victoria, *Les Mis* at the Palace and *The Phantom of the Opera* at Her Majesty's have all broken *Superstar's* record to become, it would seem, permanent fixtures. The longest-running West End productions are all musicals,

PHOTOGRAPH BY TONY MCGOWAN

with the exception of that extraordinary aberrant thriller *The Mousetrap*, which has been running for the last 44 years.

"There's no reason why a show like *Cats* or *Phantom* or *Les Mis* should ever close," says Tim Rice, "the audience is always renewing itself. It has all happened since 1980, when audiences began to be drawn from all over the world by tourism. These shows are as much tourist attractions as they are theatrical experiences. But in the early 1970s a run of more than three years was phenomenal."

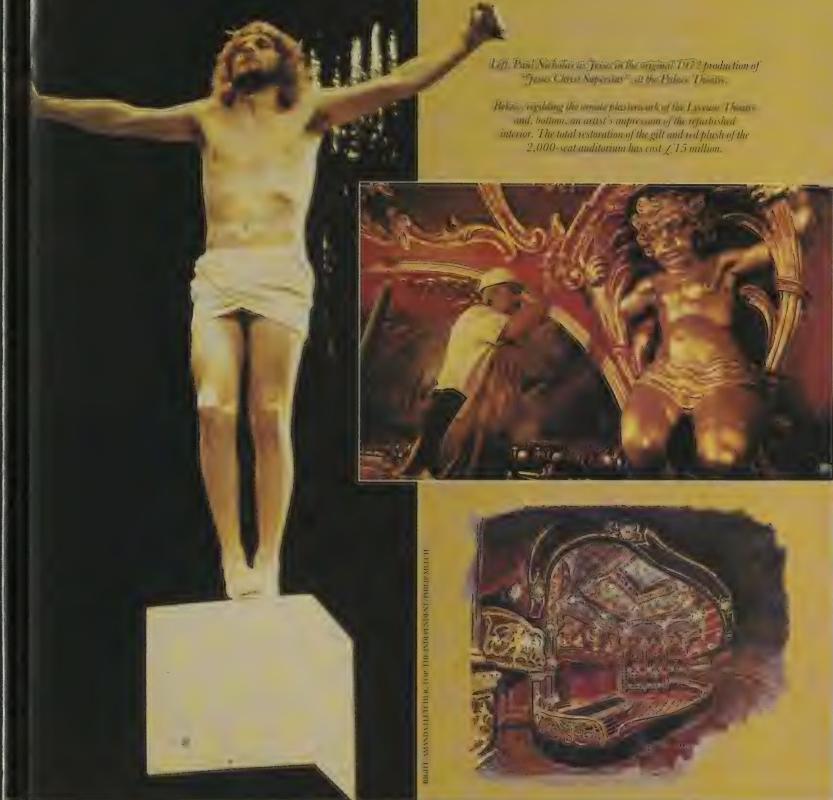
The West End is sold hard abroad as an incentive to visit Britain. The British Airways sales office on Fifth Avenue in New

York is hung with posters for *Cats* and the rest, even though many of the same shows are simultaneously entrenched on Broadway, and inclusive airline tour tickets will offer nights out at various West End musicals alongside day trips to the Tower of London and Windsor Castle.

The negative side to all this activity is that such mega-productions costing millions to stage are obliged to run for years simply in order to recoup their outlay, after which huge profits can be made. They have not only removed so many of the larger theatres from circulation, but have made it far more difficult for managements to mount straight plays. The non-musical,

unsubsidised West End is as a consequence undergoing a thin, unsettled time.

Even for musicals there are difficulties caused by the shortage of suitable stages, and many newcomers who want to join the mega-production league hardly stand a chance unless they are prepared also to build their own theatre. Looming over all such theatrical speculation is always the terrible possibility that a potential long-runner turns out to be a box-office disaster, as the usually golden-fingered producer Sir Cameron Mackintosh found a couple of years ago with his eccentric *Moby Dick*. That fate has so far eluded Sir Andrew Lloyd Webber. Even his only flop, *Jesus-*



Left, Paul Nicholas as Jesus in the original 1972 production of "Jesus Christ Superstar"; at the Lyceum Theatre.

Below, top left, the ornate plasterwork of the Lyceum Theatre; and, bottom, an artist's impression of the refurbished interior. The total restoration of the gilt and red plush of the 2,000-seat auditorium has cost £15 million.



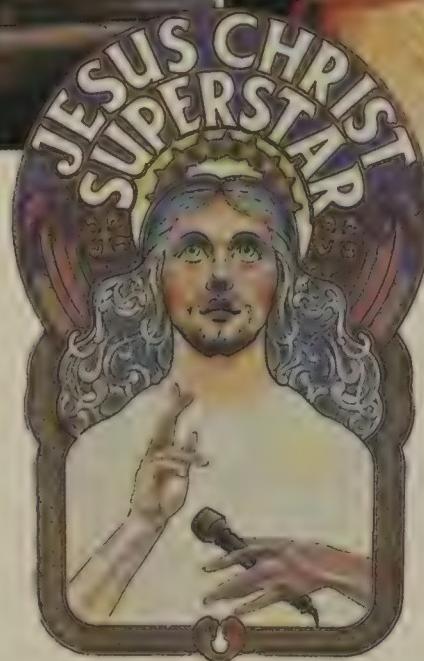
a modestly disastrous collaboration with Alan Ayckbourn in 1975—has since been revised and turned into a roaring success.

Jesus Christ Superstar has a special significance for both Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice (now also knighted) in that it was their first hit. When they embarked on its gestation in the late 1960s they were unknowns, existing on £30 a week, paid to them by their agent David Land. They were also very young. They had first met in 1965, when Lloyd Webber was only 17 and Rice was 20, and their earliest collaborations were a couple of pop singles which failed to reach the charts. The choirmaster of the Colet Court prep school in West London, a friend of the Lloyd Webber family, asked them to write a cantata with a religious theme for an end-of-term concert in 1968. They chose an Old Testament story, from which emerged *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*. It was seen by Derek Jewell, the pop-rock critic of *The Sunday Times*, whose son happened to be singing in it. He gave it an ecstatic review, which brought them immediate attention, and *Joseph* was eventually bumped up to album length.

After a flirtation with the idea of a musical based on King Richard the Lionheart, Rice and Lloyd Webber turned their attention to the New Testament, and the last days of Jesus. As a taster for MCA Records they wrote the title song, originally called "Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ".

"I remember a Sunday lunchtime at my parents' home," said Rice, "when I suddenly thought, 'Superstar' fits. I talked to Andrew and said we won't repeat 'Jesus Christ' we'll put in 'Superstar', and we thought it was a bit dodgy. When I was writing it I always had this thing that we would be struck by a thunderbolt. But either there isn't a God, or He liked it."

The track, sung by Murray Head, with choral backing and a surging Lloyd Webber orchestral arrangement, was a modest



Top left, Mike Mulloy who played the role of Judas in 1977 in the original production of "Jesus Christ Superstar", which ran at the Palace Theatre from 1972 to 1980.

Top right, a Japanese-language, kabuki-style version of the Tim Rice/Andrew Lloyd Webber musical presented at London's Dominion Theatre in 1991 as part of the Japan Festival.

single in Britain but became a hit abroad, especially in the United States. MCA then commissioned the rest of the show as an album, which was recorded in the spring of 1970 and released later that year. Early in 1972 it became the number one best-seller in the album charts. Lloyd Webber and Rice now had a top show album, but no show to go with it, and very soon unofficial live performances were taking place in the United States, the perpetrators cheekily claiming that they were not infringing stage rights since there was no stage show to infringe. The Australian impresario Robert Stigwood, recognising the potential of Lloyd Webber and Rice's talent, then bought up David Land's agency, and closed down the pirates. Stigwood next

mounted the first official stage production, which opened on Broadway in October 1971. It was restaged for London in 1972, and a film followed in 1973, directed by Norman Jewison, shot in the Israeli desert, where a busload of young performers enacted the show amid Roman ruins, an effect marred when Judas finds himself being pursued by tanks and fighter jets of the Israeli air force.

In the last 25 years *Jesus Christ Superstar* has been performed constantly in many different forms. There has even been a Japanese kabuki version. The simplicity and universality of the story, which is presented entirely musically with no intervening dialogue, give it an easy accessibility. Much of the original score employs idioms of popular music of the early 1970s and to a knowledgeable ear some of it now sounds dated. The new production at the Lyceum is a determined attempt to inject fresh vitality. In the Palace show aspects of the staging gave it the appearance of an expanded rock concert, with minimal scenery, exaggerated lighting effects and the performers singing into hand-held mikes, sometimes not too surreptitiously slipped from one singer to another. There was an oddly surreal touch in the resourceful use of a microphone lead for the scouring of Jesus.

Gale Edwards, the Australian director of the new production, is all too aware that for many people *Jesus Christ Superstar* represents the 1970s. Her prime intention has been to give it an entirely fresh relevance. "When Andrew first spoke to us about the show he showed us the Holbein painting of Christ, a cadaver on a slab, cold and brutal, with gnarled fingers, a gaping hole in the side, completely the opposite of the romantic reclining Christ of the Pre-Raphaelite era, and he said: 'That's what I think *Jesus Christ Superstar* should be about. We should put the needle into the reality and brutality of the story. I want it addressed

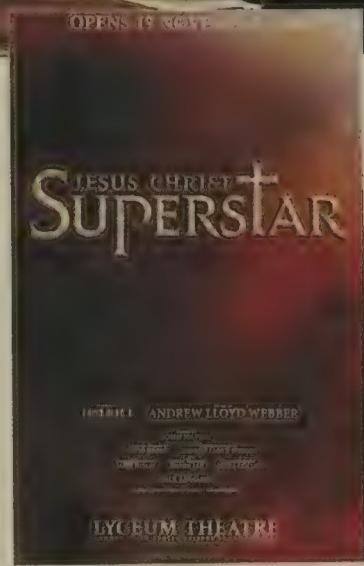


seriously, with a sense of rawness and brutality.' If it had been a flashing Perspex version of *Superstar* I wouldn't have wanted to do it, because I wouldn't have known what I could bring to it.'

John Napier, who was the production designer of Norma Desmond's salon in Andrew Lloyd Webber's *Sunset Boulevard* around the corner at the Adelphi, has tried to give the Lyceum an atmosphere so vivid that the audience will imagine that it can feel the desert sand of the Holy Land between its toes. Anyone expecting a conventional proscenium performance in a refurbished Edwardian theatre is in for a surprise. "After coming up the magnificent staircase in the foyer they will suddenly see ahead of them scaffolding, crumbling masonry and sun-baked desert sand," he says. The stage thrusts out into a raised stalls area making a huge semi-circle, and a crumbling Roman amphitheatre, with tiered seats on which some members of the audience will be seated, partially surrounds the performing space.

The freshly-gilded ornamentation above the proscenium arch has now been covered over with matt paint resembling wartime camouflage, and several of the boxes at the side of the auditorium have been incorporated into the set, either for lighting or for actors' entrances.

Gale Edwards has shaped an ensemble production with a varied collection of youthful performers representing different sizes, shapes, races and personalities. "They are certainly not the usual beautiful people you see in the chorus of a West End musical. But they are great individuals," she says. The casting of the leads pursues the notion of young and fresh faces. They are not entirely inexperienced. Steve Balsamo, from Wales, who plays Jesus, was in the Dublin and Edinburgh productions of *Les Misérables* and has been lead singer and writer for the bands Living Room, The



Top left, model of the set for the new production, depicting a Roman amphitheatre with tiered seats, on which some of the audience will sit.

Top right, the three young leads at the Lyceum: Zubin Varla (Judas), Joanna Ampil (Mary Magdalene) and Steve Balsamo (Jesus).

Below, artist's impression of the restored Lyceum.

Faith and After Dark. Zubin Varla, who fills the role of Judas, has played Romeo for the RSC at Stratford and the Barbican and was Sir Galahad in a recent production of *A Connecticut Yankee* at the Regent's Park Open Air Theatre. Mary Magdalene is played by Joanna Ampil, who comes from the Philippines and has appeared in *Miss Saigon* at Drury Lane and in Sydney. All three of them have now achieved the biggest break in their careers.

Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice, probably the most gifted partnership in British musical theatre since Gilbert and Sullivan, for complex reasons split up after *Evita*, and occasional professional acrimony has followed. Lloyd Webber's subsequent lyricists have included Don Black,



Richard Stilgoe, Christopher Hampton and even, in the case of *Cats*, T.S. Eliot, each bringing a particular talent to the work.

Rice's flair is to inject cynicism into what initially seems like a lightweight line, a characteristic acknowledged by Lloyd Webber who summarises it: "Some writers will write 'I love you.' In Tim's case it would come out as 'I love you, but . . .' " Rice's career went off in a different direction and in recent years his association with Disney in Hollywood has earned him two song-writing Oscars, for *Aladdin* and *The Lion King*, one of the most successful films ever made. The possibility that he and Lloyd Webber could collaborate again is not an entirely remote fantasy. There was a sort of coming-together for *Jesus Christ Superstar* which resulted in some amendments. "Nothing drastic, I've changed one or two lines here and there, just to correct bad rhymes," says Rice. More promisingly, they have actually written an entirely new song for the film version of *Evita*, starring Madonna and directed by Alan Parker, which will appear this winter. As Jesus has proved, miracles are not impossible *

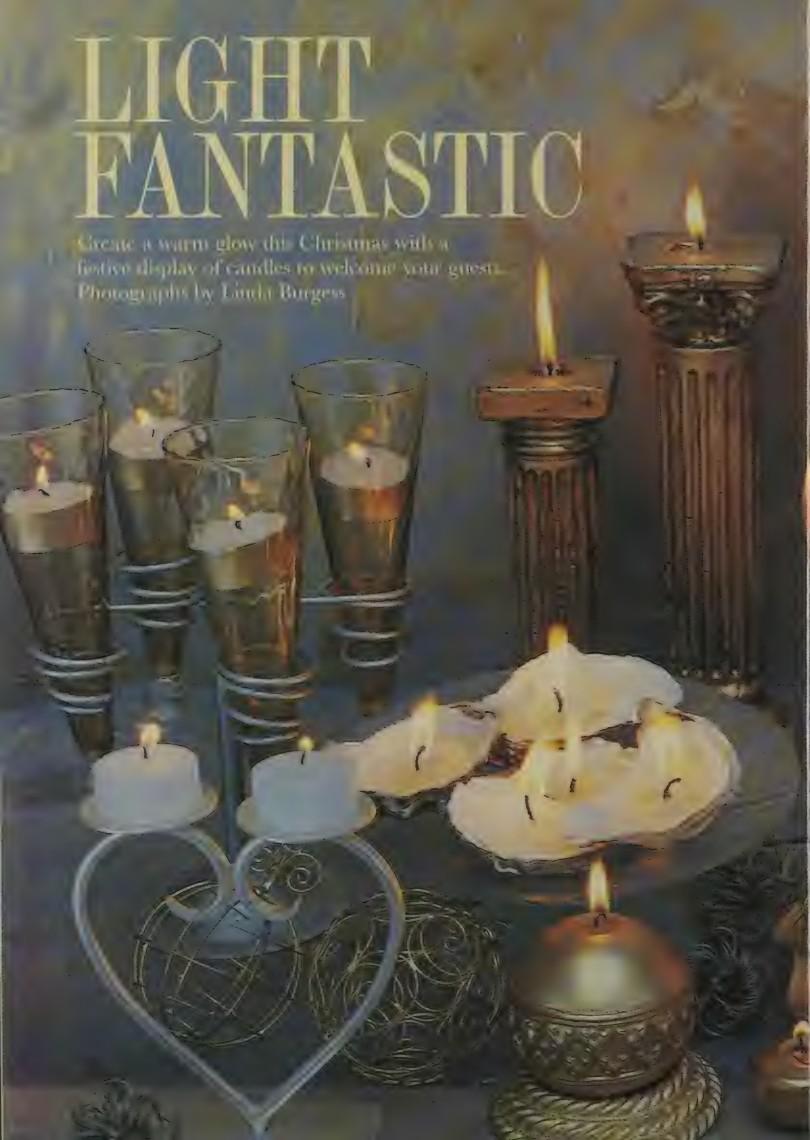


AMANDA FLETCHER

LIGHT FANTASTIC

Create a warm glow this Christmas with a festive display of candles to welcome your guests.

Photographs by Linda Burgess





STYLING: AMANDA ROBERTSON

No single object more aptly catches the spirit of Christmas than a lighted candle, its flame gently flickering in a darkened room. Make that a host of richly decorated candles, wafting out a warm, beeswaxy fragrance, and the scene is set for celebration.

Every year candles and their holders grow ever more inventive, twisted and tapered into increasingly extravagant shapes. Yet nothing brings a greater sense of tradition: candles are one of the earliest inventions of the ancient world and illuminated homes in Egypt and Crete as far back as 3000BC.

This Christmas why not try out some of the ideas shown on these pages. Reflect the magic of the season with fanciful floating candles in a bowl as a table centrepiece, see above. There is an infinite variety of shapes and sizes of candles to choose from. Opt for opulence with some of the grander, more elaborate columns of patterned wax that stand a foot tall in bold gold, or make a dramatic statement with large flamboyantly twisted candles. If your time is at a premium, create a festive ambience at a stroke with one decorative candle displayed in a magnificent holder, such as the elegant fork holder shown on the previous page.

And if there is space in your life, be creative: many people now make their own candles, such as the oyster shell candles shown on the previous pages. They look wonderful and are simple to fashion, see right.

Above, clockwise from top left: Large ball-candle, £5.50, Stone Glow Candles, for stockists, 0181-595 8878. Mosaic candleholder, £35, Liberty, 210-220 Regent Street, London W1, 0171-734 1234. Fan, £16.99, and floater, £9.99, candles, Bright Creations, 602 King's Road, London, SW6, 0171-610 9401. Mini ball-candles, £4.95 each, The Candle Shop, 30 The Market, London WC2, 0171-836 9815. Flower floaters, 85p each, Angelic, 194 King's Road, London SW3, 0171-351 1557.



Key, below, to photograph on previous page.
1 Silver candleholder with 4 amber flute glasses, £125, designed by Maryse Boxer, for Chez Joseph, 26 Sloane Street, London SW1, 0171-245 9493. **2** Small and large gold pillar candles, £8.95 and £10.95, from Harrods, 87-135 Brompton Road, London SW1, 0171-730 1234. **3a** Cone-shaped beeswax candles, £9.50, from Heal's, 196 Tottenham Court Road, London W1, 0171-636 1666. **3b** Large gold-leaf, heart-shaped candlestick, £105, designed by Maryse Boxer, for Chez Joseph, as before. **4** Large crown candleholder, £25, from Harrods, as before. **5** Silver fork candleholder, £45, from Liberty, 210-220 Regent Street, London W1, 0171-734 1234. **6a** Feather candle, £12.95, from Harrods, as before. **6b** Gold star candleholder, £55, from Thomas Goode, 19 South Audley Street, London W1, 0171-499 2823. **7** Large square gold pillar, £13.95, from Harrods, as before. **8** Box of 2 thick, white twisted candles, £20, Thomas Goode, as before. **9** Box of 2 thin, white twisted candles, £20 Thomas Goode. **10** Small painted star candle, £14.95; **11** Small pearl ball-candles, £7.50 each; **12** Fleur-de-lis candle, £5.50; **13a** Small gold ball-candle, £12.50; **13b** Large rope candleholder, £10.95; 10-13b all Harrods, as before. **14** Oyster candles made by stylist, see instructions below. **15** Gold floaters, 75p each, Angelic, 194 King's Road, London SW3, 0171-351 1557. **16** Small silver-leaf heart-shaped candleholder, £75, designed by Maryse Boxer, for Chez Joseph, as before.

To make oyster shell candles, you will need empty oyster shells and any candles of your choice. First clean the oyster shells. Melt the candles down in an old saucepan, over a low heat. Take out the wicks from the melted wax and cut them up into 1in (2.5cm) pieces. Pour the melted wax into the oyster shells. Once the wax has started to set, place the wicks into it so that they stand vertical in the oyster shells. Once lighted, these candles look exceptionally attractive: as the wax melts the candlelight reflects prettily off the inside of the shell.

The delicate decorative foliage used in the photograph on the previous pages is dried clematis heads, simply sprayed with silver and gold paint. You can use the same method with any other dried foliage of your choice from the garden.

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Photography courtesy of Marlowe, Warner & Jones

THE GIFT OF LEARNING

Stuck for Christmas-present ideas? Do not despair.

Nicole Swengley's round-up of workshops and courses has something for everyone—and you don't even have to wrap them!

A Christmas present of a workshop or a practical course for friends or family provides them with a memorable experience and solves the gift dilemma in a creative fashion. Hundreds of courses take place around the country throughout the year, from dry-stone walling to driving a racing car, from operating a JCB digger to loving your Aga.

Most courses are suitable for beginners but it's a good idea to ask exactly what is involved when booking. Prices given are only a guide—they may or may not include materials and meals—so check first. Many organisations have decorative gift vouchers which can be given as presents for a special Christmas Day surprise.

WALL TO WALL FUN

Dry-Stone Walling When asked why anyone would volunteer, let alone pay, to learn a task that has exhausted generations of farmers, Alan Hill has a ready answer. The deputy chairman of Britain's Dry-Stone Walling Association says: "Dry-stone walling provides great mental relaxation as well as a physical challenge." He adds: "The course attracts all sorts of people of all ages. We get a lot of men and women who work in offices all week and appreciate the chance to do something physical out of doors."

Courses are usually held over weekends in the upland areas across the country where dry stone walls are found, ranging from Devon and Cornwall to North Yorkshire and the Pennines. The main difference between these and other walls, is that the dry-stone variety is made with no mortar or cement.

After a talk on techniques, students are asked to take an existing wall right down to the ground, stone by stone, to see how it was built. Then they rebuild the same wall under instruction, using batter frames to contain the stonework. On the second day they carry on building the wall to a height of around 4 feet, then finish it off with coping stones.

Numbers are limited to a maximum of 12 students per course. Safety goggles and tools are provided, but participants are asked to bring industrial gloves, heavy-duty leather footwear and thick outdoor clothes.

"After two days, students have the knowledge to tackle any basic wall," says

Alan. "Then they can mend walls on their own properties or attend one of our training or practice weekends to help rebuild walls around the countryside. Many people, especially ramblers, enjoy putting something back into the countryside."

POLE POSITION

Open Track Day If your nearest and dearest was glued to the television during the Grand Prix season, egging on Damon Hill, here's your chance to let them put their rev counter where their remote control is.

Drivers on the Open Track Day at Jim Russell Racing Drivers School, at Castle Donington, Derbyshire, spend time initially in a single-seater car learning heel-and-toe technique for changing gear, they then enjoy a couple of sessions with a professional instructor, driving as fast as they're capable of in a touring car on the main circuit.

An auto-test follows—for example, a timed slalom—in a Caterham two-seater sports car, which offers the opportunity to accelerate from 0 to 60mph in four seconds. A session in a skid-control car with a professional instructor follows. With the car strapped in a cradle for safety, students are taught the basics of controlling a car in difficult situations, for example on damp tarmac or black ice. The day ends with a tour of the Donington Collection—the world's largest collection of Grand Prix cars.

"This course is action-packed," promises sales director Jonathan Tait. "There's no standing around. We like to keep everyone constantly on the go." Nor is there an age-limit. "We've had participants as young as 14 and right up to 82—and that needn't be the limit," he says. "Basically, we'll take anyone who can change gear."

SEW EASY!

Embroidery for beginners

The Embroiderers' Guild runs beginners' courses at its headquarters in the august surroundings of Hampton Court Palace. They take place in the Ballroom, a light, airy room with three lovely windows overlooking the palace moat.

There are five-day beginners' courses in either hand or machine embroidery. "If you're new to embroidery, these courses are a terrific eye-opener," says organiser Corynna

Bridgwood. "So many people think of embroidery as lazy-daisy stitch on tray-cloths and are amazed at the marvellous things people do these days."

"Our hand embroidery course takes up to 16 students and consists of mastering a variety of stitches and then producing a contemporary sampler," explains Corynna. "The machine embroidery course takes a maximum of 12, and assumes very little knowledge other than how to thread your machine. Students are taught different types of stitch, and produce samples of these, and techniques, such as appliquéd quilting." Depending on individual rate of progress, students may make a small embroidered bag by the end of the latter course. But, as Corynna emphasises: "The courses are informal, relaxed and enjoyable. You can't do something creative if you're tense about it."

The theme for 1997 is silk, and courses include a talk on the "History of Silk", by the historian Caroline Washington, and one by Sheila Paine on "Ethnic Embroideries from the Silk Route Countries".

Newcomers looking for inspiration, as well as embroidery enthusiasts, should not miss the guild's Christmas Show, from December 7 to 12 at Hampton Court Palace, where a plethora of embroidered items from hangings, to clothes, to cushions and even embroidered Christmas cards will be on sale.

When you book, you are sent a list of materials and where to buy them. And what do people get out of the courses? Says Corynna: "Students take away what they've made—along with dozens of ideas about how to carry on embroidery at home."

SILVER LININGS

Wolds Silver Course Jewellery is always very personal and special to the wearer: it becomes doubly so when they have made it themselves. Silversmith Vincent Ashworth says: "On our course people can make whatever they wish, which may vary from making a silver ring or spoon to a box or napkin ring."

Silversmithing is one of the oldest metal crafts and many of the working processes are little changed since its earliest days. Students learn a wide range of techniques, including soldering, wire-making, piercing, planishing



and raising. "I supply materials and charge according to the weight of the finished item," explains Vincent. "There's no set syllabus, and as there are only between five and 10 students I can provide personal tuition."

At the end of the course Vincent hallmarks your finished piece with his initials and sends it to the assay office in London for the official leopard's head hallmark and sterling silver mark. He charges postage only for this, the price varying according to weight.

The course takes place at Wolds Silver, North Yorkshire—from 1560 to 1865 the city of York was a major centre of silversmithing and even had its own assay office. Vincent also holds weekend workshops at colleges around the country.

"Most people find it fairly easy to work in silver," says Vincent. "They seem quite surprised at the fine results they can achieve, especially if they're totally inexperienced. It's a very satisfying course in many ways. Not only do students make work which they can take home with them, but they tell me that they find the process of silversmithing very absorbing and therapeutic."

ART FOR EVERYONE

Drawing for the Terrified Aspiring artists who suffer from blank canvas syndrome may find this course is just what they need to release their creative juices. "I believe everyone can draw," says tutor, Richard Box, who specialises in teaching beginners, "but people get bogged down with wanting to be a success."

"The emphasis of my course is on the means rather than the end; the process rather than the result. My students find that good drawings occur naturally, by not focusing on achievement." He says that when people are worried about looking foolish, or think they cannot be creative, he asks them to study children's drawings: "They prove we can all draw—we did as children." Richard also stresses the importance of feeling relaxed,



Gifts to remember, clockwise from above, courses on drawing, gardening, Aga cookery, being a cover girl, JCB digging, and dry-stone walling.

moving slowly and quietly until students are fully absorbed with what is happening with the materials and the paper.

"Drawing is all about learning to see," he says—and feel, and touch and hear. He brings into play all the senses. Students are subsequently set drawing exercises which include shading and colour practice.

The courses take place at various venues from Cumbria to Wales to the south coast, at weekends throughout the year. "Above all," says Richard, "the course is concerned with enjoyment and fun. As John Ruskin once said, 'I would rather teach drawing that my pupils may learn to love nature, than the looking at nature that they may learn to draw'."

DIG OR DARE!

JCB Digging If you know someone who enjoys a bit of off-the-wall fun, this course is the one for them. The JCB Digging course takes place on Kent farmland. The half day starts with a safety briefing, followed by an introduction to JCBs and familiarisation with the machines. Then participants step into the hotseat to start excavating mounds of earth

and end up racing the machines in a friendly competition! And according to Red Letter Days, who run the courses, JCB digging appeals to people of all ages, with an average breakdown of 70 per cent men to 30 per cent women.

As Red Letter Days director, Lax Kabra says, "This is essentially a



wacky, fun experience that people would probably never have unless someone gave it to them as a gift."

Gyroplane Flight Send someone pie in the sky in a machine that's a cross between a helicopter and a microlight. Participants start their gyroplane course with a safety briefing, before zooming off with an instructor in a dual-control machine for a 20-minute or one-hour flight over dramatic Cumbrian countryside. "People really enjoy their bird's-eye view of the fells and lakes," says Lax. "They say it's a wonderful experience that they'll never forget."

FLOWERING TALENTS

Small is Beautiful Anyone with a small garden who needs some big ideas to turn it into a lush haven will find plenty on offer at The English Gardening School, based at Chelsea Physic Garden in London. During breaks students also have the opportunity to visit the lovely Physic Garden itself, which was founded in 1673 by the Society of Apothecaries of London to teach fledgling apothecaries and physicians how to recognise and use the plants as medicines.

Small is Beautiful is a gardening course aimed specifically at enthusiastic amateurs with small plots—courtyards or smaller-than-average town gardens. "The course is very enjoyable, with a nice lunch, and we aim to provide lots of ideas which people can use at home," says Rosemary Alexander, the school's principal. The two-day course takes place in a studio, with lectures and slides on the design principles of making the best use of limited space.

Day one looks at examples of small gardens and considers the best use of space. Ideas discussed include illusion, such as the use of mirrors, and how to alter perspective with simple stepped variations of level, plus advice on the use of materials such as trellis, and a look at how paths are laid. The 16 students are encouraged to bring the dimensions as well as photographs of their





own gardens, and consideration is given to a variety of garden shapes so that participants, with the help of the tutor, can work out a basic design for their plots and draw up a plan using a grid. In the afternoon there is a visit to two or three small gardens in central London.

Day two includes advice on choosing plants that are suited to these tiny spaces and a look at co-ordinated planting schemes and decorative features such as pots, pergolas and furniture.

At the end of the course, students come away with their basic plan and a wealth of ideas about how to implement it.

FOR AGA ADDICTS

Aga cookery workshops As anyone who has encountered an Aga owner knows, people do not just own an Aga, they are utterly passionate about it, so what could be more appealing for the smitten than a day spent getting to know it better? "My Aga workshops are all about know-how and technique," says cookery writer and Aga expert Mary Berry. "No practical work is involved. My aim is to encourage and inspire those brought up with an Aga, and to help new owners gain confidence and master the art of Aga cookery."

The courses take place at Mary's home in Buckingham and, according to regular participant Liz Andrews, the day is informal and it is easy to get your questions answered. "There are very few specialist courses that you can attend for just a day, and in someone's house," she says. It is a very relaxed atmosphere. And you learn just as

WHERE THERE'S A GIFT...

Dry-Stone Walling The Dry-Stone Walling Association of Great Britain, c/o YFC Centre, NAC Stoneleigh Park, Warwick CV8 2LG, tel: 0121-378 0493. A leaflet is available with details of local courses and practice meets. For an information pack about the craft and details of the association please send sae. Courses take place mainly at weekends, from £30.

Open Track Day Jim Russell Racing Drivers School, Donington Park, Castle Donington, Derbyshire D74 2RP, tel: 01332 811430. One-day course, £235.

Embroidery for Beginners Embroiderers' Guild, Apt 41, Hampton Court Palace, East Molesey, Surrey KT8 9AU, tel: 0181-943 1229. Workshops, £154 for five days including certificate of attendance and lunch. For a full range of courses offered please send an A5 sae to the above address.

Wolds Silver Course Wolds Silver, Rothay Cottage, Leppington, Malton, North Yorks YO17 9RL, tel: 01653 658485. One day, from April-December, £60 (materials extra).

Weekend workshop May 16-18, 1997, at Missenden Abbey, Great Missenden, Bucks HP16 0BD, tel: 01494 890296, £75 non-residential, (but includes Saturday lunch); £159 residential (including meals, materials extra).

Also at Alston Hall College, Longridge, Preston, tel: 01772 784661; Horn castle College, Horn castle, Lincs, tel: 01507 522449; Knutson Hall College, Irchester, Northants, tel: 01933 312104.

much by watching as you would by participating because Mary Berry is such a good demonstrator."

Numbers are limited to 20, allowing time for tastings and to discuss individual problems. "I try to show how to create interesting, inventive recipes and aim to make around nine dishes during the day, using an overhead mirror to ensure everyone can see," explains Mary. "I demonstrate short cuts and show how to use the roasting oven—not only for roasting and baking but in the true Aga tradition for grilling and frying."

Lunch is included—Aga-cooked, of course—and the proof of the pudding is that a high proportion of students return. Themes for 1997 include: Making the Most of the Aga; A Taste of Summer; A Flavour of the Mediterranean; and Christmas Masterclass.

PHOTO FINISH!

Cover Shots Two hours is all it takes to banish post-Christmas pallor and emerge a glamorous cover girl. This wonderfully self-indulgent course guarantees to take the most ordinary-looking woman and, through skilful make-up and hairstyling, give her a supermodel look. This treatment really will have you believing you have been recreated.

"It appeals to women of all ages," says director, Lax Kabra, "and offers a chance for people to be pampered and to see their best side recorded for posterity." The Cover Shots course takes place in studios in London, Birmingham, Manchester or Glasgow. A gift voucher, in a laminated envelope with a gold seal, is sent to participants beforehand, detailing what to expect on the day. The course is run by an all-female staff and the cover-girl-to-be need only relax, have fun and pick up some beauty tips from the experts.

The course includes a one-to-one discussion with a professional beauty

Drawing for the Terrified

Alston Hall College, Alston Lane, Longridge, Preston, Lancs PR3 3BP, tel: 01772 784661. Weekend, £80 (£72 if you live in Lancashire). Richard Box's book *Drawing for the Terrified* will be published by David & Charles in March, price £15.99 and will be available at Missenden Abbey (another course venue), Great Missenden, Bucks HP16 0BD, tel: 01494 890296.

JCB Digging or Gyroplane Flight Red Letter Days, Melville House, 8-12 Woodhouse Road, London N12 0RG, tel: 0181-343 8822. JCB Digging, half-day £65. Gyroplane 20-minute flight £60, one-hour flight £125.

Small is Beautiful, The English Gardening School, 66 Royal Hospital Road, London SW3 4HS, tel: 0171-352 4347. Two-day course, £170. Telephone for a catalogue of various courses available throughout the year.

Aga Workshops Mary Berry, Watercroft, Church Road, Penn, Bucks HP10 8NX, tel: 01494 816535. One day £82.25; two days £158.63.

Cover Shots Red Letter Days, Melville House, 8-12 Woodhouse Road, London N12 0RG, tel: 0181-343 8822. Course, £195 which includes the price of one 10x8in (25x20cm) framed picture.

French for Property Owners The Country House Course, Holmstall, Mayfield, East Sussex TN20 6NJ, tel: 01435 872275. Weekend, £160 non-residential.

consultant to discover the kind of looks the participant wants to achieve, then the experts get to work, applying professional photographic make-up and hair-styling to create an aura of glamour that most of us don't see as we get ready day-to-day. Six different looks are created and captured during a professional photographic session. Then the participant is shown a slide-show of her fabulous new looks and can choose one to be framed—this is included in the cost of the course. Should she find it impossible to choose, the participant also has the option to purchase any or all of the other five photographs of her glamorous new looks.

FRENCH LEAVE

French for Property Owners A pipe burst in your friends' idyllic French farmhouse and they didn't know the words for "stopcock", "plumber" or "flood". What they need is this informal course.

French for Property Owners takes place in the relaxed surroundings of a converted oast house in East Sussex. With a maximum of 15 students and two qualified tutors—one English, one French—participants brush up on French conversation with the emphasis on the phrases and words that property owners (and aspiring owners) need to learn.

"As far as I know, we're unique in offering a course like this," says principal, Moreen Biron. "People enjoy practising their French in an informal situation and our tutors take a very imaginative approach to persuade them to converse, including role-playing. Although students are often shy at first, they soon relax and enjoy themselves."

"We also provide students with a glossary sheet of useful words and phrases needed for instructing builders or electricians, or buying DIY materials in France." Peter Mayle eat your heart out! *



NORDIC RACE



Reindeer racing in Finnish Lapland is as much of a tradition as horse racing in Britain. Serious bets are placed and a champion racer can be worth £5,000. And, just as at Ascot and Aintree, recalcitrant animals and mishaps to riders add to the excitement and entertainment of the occasion.

Brilliant colours flash in a blur across the snow in the wake of two thundering reindeer. This is not, to paraphrase Oscar Wilde, the insufferable in full pursuit of the edible, but reindeer racing. An ancient sport in Finnish Lapland, the tradition reflects the long-standing relationship between the Lapps and their animals. Once reindeer were essential for survival in the Arctic: their meat as a source of food, their skins to make tents and clothing as protection against the intense winter cold. They also provided an efficient form of transport as they could be trained to pull sledges.

In the past, reindeer racing sprang from friendly competition between the breeders, but now it has been updated to take advantage of 20th-century technology. The reindeer no longer pull the breeders, who were seated on wooden sleds, but teenagers perched on carbon-fibre skis, wearing goggles and face masks to prevent their skin from freezing in the sub-zero temperatures.



The racing reindeer arrive at the course in vans and hop out into the snow like labradors out of a car. The owners lead the animals round the 2-kilometre track, which is marked out with twigs, to familiarise them with the circuit—a necessary ritual. "Reindeer aren't intelligent animals, they need to be shown where to go," says one of the organisers. Indeed: it can apparently take up to six years to train one to pull a sledge.

The animals are tethered to stakes inside an enclosure before being harnessed and prepared for the race. Like racehorses, the reindeer are led on to the course and placed in starting stalls. The jockeys, instead of being seated on the animal's back, crouch behind them on skis holding two reins each, one for steering and one "tow rope", waiting for the "off".

Then the gates spring up and the reindeer are away, pulling the jockeys behind them, racing with speed and enthusiasm—well, most of them, anyway. Among the good racers, there are animals that

stubbornly refuse to leave the stalls, and others determined to abandon the course and run across country. A continual series of mishaps provides amusement for the crowd. Jockeys collide, lose their balance and collapse in a writhing heap into the snow.

Entertainment apart, the general air of concentration among the spectators indicates how seriously reindeer racing is taken. This is largely because a great deal of money changes hands at the races. Owners also have a vested interest since a top racer can be worth £5,000 or more—although the price is academic, because champions are rarely sold, being kept for breeding.

Between events, serious punters spend the time studying the list of starters for the next race, while others browse among the stalls, which sell everything from the latest in reindeer racing harnesses to warm hats and mittens. There is also a good choice of refreshments: hot soup, coffee, baked salmon and even reindeer stew ...

Words and picture by Bryan and Cherry Alexander.

A BREAK WITH TRADITION

Pamper yourself during the festive season with a luxury holiday.

*R*elax, laze and swim in
a tropical paradise



*S*ettle in front of an open fire, and tea is served!



► Enjoy a traditional English Christmas or winter break at Tytheby Hall, a splendid country house in North Hampshire, less than 15 minutes from London. Tytheby Hall's leisure facilities include two tennis courts, indoor heated swimming pool, sauna and gymnasium. An 18-hole golf course is adjacent to the hotel. The award-winning Oak Room restaurant offers superb cuisine. Delicious teas are served in front of open fires in the lounge and the library offers cocktails and mulled wine after a bracing walk in the 66 acres of landscaped grounds. Winter breaks start at £79 per person per night.

*Tytheby Hall, Rottingdean, Hove,
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► Silvery sands, warm, crystal-clear waters, lush mountains, bright tropical flowers, fabled hospitality...try Mauritius and you'll agree that heaven was modelled on this little jewel of an island. Air Mauritius' exclusive non-stop flight will whisk you to this island paradise. Spoil yourself with a helicopter transfer from the airport to your hotel and enjoy breathtaking views of white sandy beaches just waiting for you...

Mauritian Tourism Promotion Authority, 32 Euston Place, London SW1 3NW, tel: 0111 584 5666; An Mauritius, 49 Old Bond Street, London W1R 9FB, tel: 0111 583 7075; at Room 3067, Terminal 2, Manchester Airport, M90 4QX, tel: 0161 498 9909.

*B*eautiful hotel and country club in forested parkland



► Ashdown Park Hotel and its 126 acres of beautiful parkland in the heart of Ashdown Forest is a perfect base for the southeast of England with Tunbridge Wells, Brighton, opera at Glyndebourne and Lingfield racecourse nearby. This impressive hotel, built in 1867, boasts the RAC's supreme Blue Ribbon accolade and Red Stars from the AA. Several of the 95 bedrooms and suites have four-poster beds, whirlpool baths and panoramic views. Enjoy fine cuisine and wines in the Anderida Restaurant overlooking the immaculate lawns and lake. The exclusive Country Club has an indoor pool, sauna and gym, beauty salon and solarium. There are also tennis and squash courts, golf course, driving range, snooker and croquet. Short Break rates, throughout the winter, start at £79 per person including breakfast, table d'hôte dinner and full use of the Country Club.

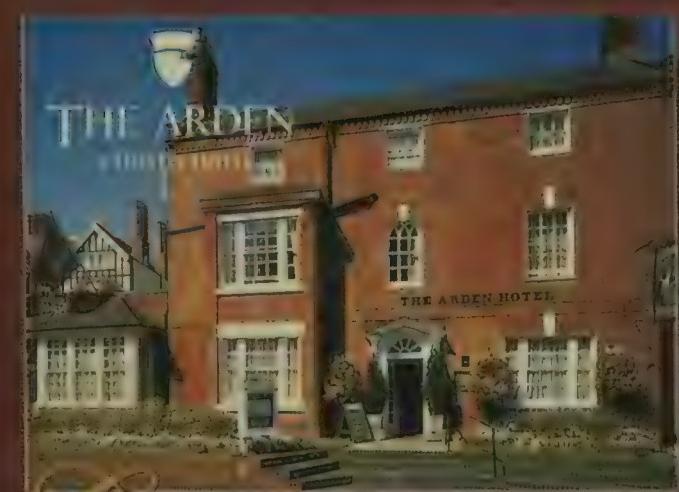
Ashdown Park Hotel, Washway, East Grinstead, East Sussex RH18 5JR, tel: 01342 824988.



*A*n ancient culture and a new holiday destination

Vietnam—the name conjures up many images—conflicts history, bustling cities, natural beauty. Enjoy its rich ancient culture and still-present colonial past—most evident in the charming French architecture and tree-shaded streets of Hanoi—its 2,000 kilometres of pristine coastline, and lush verdant mountains. Come and explore this beautiful country, as yet, relatively unknown to the western world, and be delightfully surprised.

LTM Tours, 12a Newman Street, London W1P 4HD, 0171 436 2788; 0101 3692



*E*njoy a weekend theatre break in Shakespeare country

Situated in the Elizabethan splendour of Stratford-upon-Avon, the Arden Thistle Hotel has all the charm, comfort and atmosphere of an English country house. The hotel is located in the heart of this historic town, overlooking the River Avon and the Royal Shakespeare Theatre. For a

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The Arden Thistle Hotel, Waterside, Stratford upon Avon, Warwickshire CV37 6BA; tel: 01789 294949.



*S*favour Victorian elegance in the heart of stylish London

In a terrace of white-painted early Victorian houses in the heart of South Kensington and only a 10-minute walk from Harrods, Number Sixteen is ideally located for shopping, theatre and the West End. The hotel offers style, elegance and seclusion. Guests can relax in the comfortable informality of the drawing room and help themselves to a drink from the honour bar in the library, or enjoy the conservatory which opens on to the award-winning walled garden.

Number Sixteen, 16 Sloane Place, London SW7 3HG, 0171 89 2337

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Enjoy a weekend break and a warm welcome in a luxurious suite in the elegant exclusivity of The Lowell, in Manhattan. For shoppers there's a private tour of Barneys New York, on Madison Avenue; and after a day of glorious shopping, relax with a well-deserved cocktail and enjoy

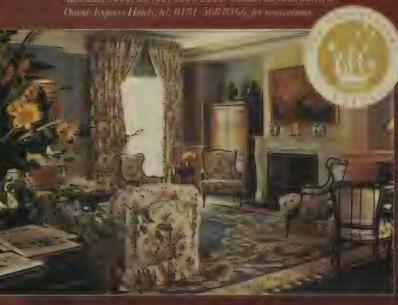
a selection of gourmet snacks, in front of your very own wood-burning fireplace, in your home away from home. The weekend break costs \$445, plus taxes, per night, for a minimum of two nights.

The Lowell, 28 East Sixty-third Street, New York, NY 10021; 8088; tel: (212) 838 1400; Fax: (212) 319 4230.

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The Observatory Hotel, 89, 113 Kent Street, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia, 2000, tel: (02) 9256 2222. Contact the hotel direct, or *Orient-Express Hotels, tel: 0171-368 2365, for reservations.*



▼ At a time when it is synonymous with snow, roasting chestnuts and brightly packaged presents, treat yourself to the heights of hotel luxury at the Grosvenor House, on London's famous Park Lane. Between December 3 1996 and January 10 1997, excluding New Year's Eve, there are special rates of just £210 per single room or £250 per double room. This includes a 3-course dinner,

with a glass of champagne, at either Cafe Nicolo, The Italian Restaurant, and one night's accommodation in a deluxe room. For guests wishing to take advantage of these rates between December 10 1996 and January 10 1997, a full English breakfast is also included.

Grosvenor House, Park Lane, London W1A 5AA. Reservations 0114-299 5363; please quote XMAS/GH.

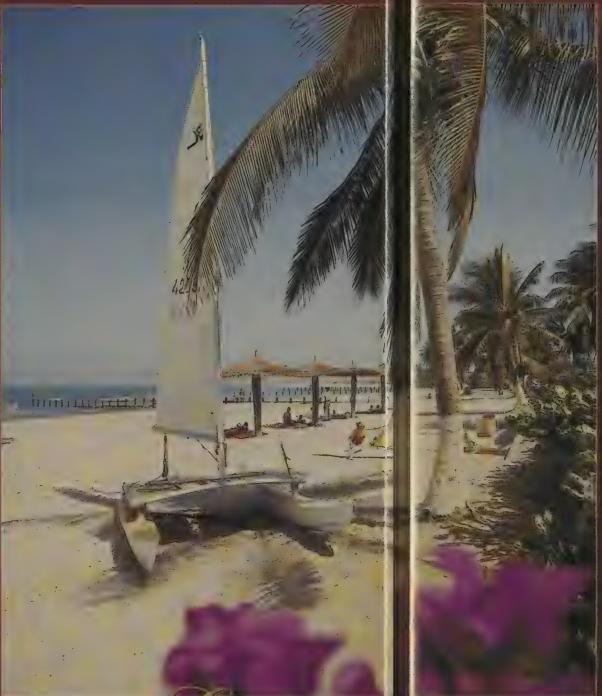
Have yourself a Merry London Christmas



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▲ A little Africa... that's The Gambia. Less than six hours flying time from London and with year-round sunshine and golden sandy beaches, this is the perfect place to unwind - and GMT means no jet lag to worry about, so you really can enjoy every minute. Five-star luxury hotels and restaurants offer multi-national cuisine. So whether you want to soak up the sun, fish or play golf, watch birds or wildlife, The Gambia has it all!

*Gambia National Travel Office,
Gambian High Commission Building,
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(0181) 734 5100/0993.*



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*Eastwell Manor, Eastwell Park,
Boughton Lane, Ashford, Kent TN25
HJM, 01233-219555. A full Christmas
brochure is available on request; please
telephone Freephone 0800-526152.*



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Join a special double celebration at The Ritz



► The Ritz, London, one of the world's most romantic hotels, will end its 90th birthday celebrations with a glorious three-day Christmas finale from December 23-26. Mince pie, dinner and dancing, Christmas carols, Champagne and flowers, breakfast in bed, Christmas luncheon with the Queen, the Queen's speech, mince pie time, The Ritz pantomime and, of course, afternoon tea - all part of a very special programme. The cost is £650 per person sharing a double room or double room for three nights with breakfast.

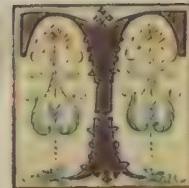
*Christmas Co-ordinator, The Ritz,
150 Piccadilly, London W1V 9DG,
(0117) 2629 4350.*



A MEDIEVAL CHRISTMAS FEAST

In the Middle Ages the wealthy impressed their guests with sumptuous repasts. Carol Wilson recaptures the flavours for today's Christmas table. Photograph by Paul Webster.





The familiar warm, spicy fragrance and rich, fruity flavours of traditional Christmas fare are a distant echo from our medieval past. Recipes have survived through the centuries, frequently undergoing intervention and adaptation to meet the tastes of a particular time.

Costly, new and luxurious foodstuffs, in the form of dried fruits, spices, sugar, almonds and citrus fruits were imported from exotic lands in vast quantities. Such foods were the newly fashionable status symbols of a rich and self-indulgent elite and were used lavishly in the great feasts of the time, particularly at Christmas.

The festive repasts of the Middle Ages were spectacular events, their magnificence varying with the wealth of the host. King Richard II's Yuletide party was reputed to have catered for 10,000 people daily. The walls of the great hall where the feast was held (the word banquet didn't come into use until after the medieval period) were hung with rich tapestries, and sweet-smelling herbs were strewn on the floor. Beautiful cloths, sometimes of silk, covered the tables. Entertainments were an important part of the festivities, with minstrels, jugglers, acrobats, jesters and mummers performing throughout.

The general public were allowed to crowd into the hall or the gallery to watch the proceedings from a respectful distance, and the leftovers from each course were collected and distributed among them. They must have been awestruck by the array of fabulous delicacies, particularly as their normal meagre diet consisted of vegetables, cereal pottages and the occasional piece of meat. Christmas afforded them a rare opportunity to taste some more exotic delights.

The host and his important guests were seated at the top table. The main salt cellar (the word is derived from the French *salier*, meaning salt box) was placed next to the host. Ornately designed, it was often of immense value and in noble households was usually made of silver or gold. Lesser guests were seated at tables in descending order of rank. Napkins were provided and were intricately folded for the principal guests — a bishop's, for example, would be folded in the shape of a mitre. These same folding techniques are still used today.

Although there would have been plenty of noise, a feast was not the raucous, bawdy event often portrayed in films. Strict rules related to table manners and etiquette and special books detailed the many courtesies expected at table. Guests were not to eat from their knife or talk with their mouth full, for instance. "Lene not on elbowe at thy mete" was another instruction.

The food was highly spiced—indeed, spices had a major role in medieval cookery—was frequently scented with rose water and was dyed in glorious, stained-glass colours. One of the chief skills of the medieval cook was the ability to transform simple ingredients into exotic works of art.

FOOD ECONOMIST CAROLE HANSDALE; FOOD HISTORIAN PETER BREARS; STYLIST AMANDA ROBINSON

ILLUSTRATION BY PAULINE BAYNES/ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS PICTURE LIBRARY. ILLUMINATED LETTER BY JANE THOMPSON



The jewel-bright food dyes were obtained from herbs, plants and spices. Red from sanders or saunders (a variety of sandalwood) or alkanet (a type of borage); green from mint or spinach juice; blue from mulberry juice, or a darker blue from the indigo plant; yellow from saffron; purple from turnsole (a Mediterranean plant) and black from boiled animal blood. Gold and silver leaf were used to gild foods at important feasts; black and white, particularly the latter, were also in vogue. Finished dishes were often multi-coloured, for instance striped jellies or large chequered custard tarts, which were divided into different-coloured sections. Further embellishments were added in the form of a scattering of

Exotic foods were status symbols in the Middle Ages; entertainments, too, were part of the festivities.

red and white aniseed or caraway comfits (sugar-coated seeds), pomegranate seeds or powdered spices.

The feast began with soup, followed by eggs, fish and meats. After these came the *entremets*—dishes designed to amuse and entertain, usually a roast swan or peacock splendidly arrayed in full plumage, complete with gilded beak and adorned with a silver or gold crown. Boar's head was always served at Christmas. Glazed with aspic, garlanded with herbs and leaves and its tusks gilded with gold leaf, it made an impressive centrepiece. Goose was regarded as the

chief Christmas bird and, along with other fowl, was a popular Christmas gift. Presents were given throughout the 12 days of Christmas, rather than just on Christmas Day. Each type of fish, meat and poultry was accompanied by its own sauce and it was the duty of the servers to ensure the correct ones were provided in the small dishes ("saucers") placed along the length of the table. "Egerdouce" was a spicy sauce for fish; mustard sauce accompanied boar's head; goose was served with "sauce madame", and pheasant or partridge with ginger sauce.

Prominent among the festive foods was blancmange, a thick white pottage of shredded chicken, sugar, almond milk and boiled rice, often served with one half left white and the other half coloured red or yellow. Some dishes were very complicated and elaborate, such as "Mawmeny Royal": shredded cooked capon, brawn or game, mixed with pine nuts, almond milk, currants, cooked, pureed quince, egg yolks and a great many spices. It was put into a dish and a wine sauce containing aqua vitae was poured over it, then it was set alight and served flaming. Simpler dishes included "Pommes Dorres" (golden apples): small, highly spiced pork meatballs containing currants, coated in saffron-coloured batter, then baked or fried. Half would be left a brilliant yellow while the rest were rolled in finely chopped parsley. These green and gold meatballs would make a colourful addition to a Christmas buffet today.

Jellies, an established feast day dish, were usually vividly coloured and could be striped or gilded with gold or silver leaf. Boiled calves' foot liquor was added to meat or fish stock or wine, along with sugar and spices, and was clarified by straining through a jelly bag with two egg whites.

"Gret Pyes", ornately embellished and often crenellated and turreted, their pastry decorations painted with edible dyes, were popular at Christmas. At a feast given by

the Duke of Burgundy in 1403 small pies were gilded in a chequered design, with banners placed on top depicting the various coats of arms of the guests. Fillings consisted of fish, meat or poultry, together with spices, dried fruits and sugar. It seems strange to modern tastes that sugar was used in almost every dish, with no distinction made between sweet and savoury foods. Fish pies, for example, were frequently iced or sprinkled with sugar. In fact, sugar was considered to be a spice and was kept under lock and key to be used in much the same way as, for instance, cinnamon or ginger. Rose- and violet-scented sugars were also used.

Generally, a pie meant a pastry container or "coffyn" filled with meat or fish, while a tart contained milk or preserves. "Tarte de Bry" contained Brie, cream, sugar and spices. "Croustarde Lumbarde" was an important feast day dish, whose name was derived from its pastry case, the French *croustade*. The filling itself—finely ground chicken or veal, hard-boiled egg yolks, honey and spices set in a mixture of eggs and cream—eventually came to be known simply as "custard".

"Endoring" was the favoured method of gilding pies and poultry. A mixture of beaten egg yolks, spices and saffron was painted on to the pie or bird just before the end of the cooking time and then returned to the oven to set to a gleaming gold.

No feast was complete without at least one "subtlety" (spelt in several different ways). This was an ornate table decoration composed of sugar paste or marzipan which portrayed the theme of the feast—angels, shepherds or the Magi. At very grand feasts a different one appeared after each course. The sugar sculpture, sometimes brightly coloured and festooned with banners, was paraded around the hall for everyone to admire and to marvel at the skill of the cook and the wealth and

generosity of the host. During the reign of Queen Elizabeth I "sugar plate" was used to fashion frosted plates, goblets, and even playing cards.

The Grande Finale comprised a selection of sweetmeats, fruits and wafers, accompanied by a strongly spiced sweetened wine called Hippocras which was believed to be a relaxant. (It was said to be named after the bag through which it was strained, due to its supposed resemblance to the sleeve of Hippocrates.) The brew was made up of red or white wine, sweetened with honey or sugar and flavoured with cinnamon, ginger, galangale, cloves, pepper, grains of paradise (a relative of cardamom, with a pungently hot taste, enormously popular in medieval England), cubebs (one of the pepper family, having a warm aromatic flavour) and zedoary (related to turmeric, pungent tasting and similar to ginger). The wine was often further coloured with turnsole. The spices were infused in the wine overnight and the highly flavoured liquid strained through the bag next day.

Hippocras would be served with accompaniments of sugar-coated spices such as ginger, candied peels, sugar candy and small ginger "biscuits" decorated with gold leaf. Gingerbread (the word is a corruption of Old French *gingebras*, meaning preserved ginger) was made by mixing stale breadcrumbs with honey and spices, colouring it red with saunders and pressing the mixture into moulds to dry out in a cool oven.

Hot, spiced ale was also available, often thickened with eggs or cereal. This later developed into mulled ales such as "Lambs' Wool", on which floated roasted apples whose fluffy white flesh bursting through the skin gave the drink its evocative name.

After the digestive, the spicy sweetmeats and Hippocras the meal was over. The splendid foods of the medieval Yuletide feasts were to set the pattern for many Christmases to come.

RAISED GAME PIE

Use a hinged pie mould or a deep, loose-based cake tin for this recipe; if you are artistic and used to handling hot-water crust pastry, you could pinch the dough by hand at the top to suggest crenellations or turrets. The decorative, hollow corner towers shown in the main picture on page 59 are made from a salt dough (equal parts of flour and water to half a part of salt). They need support inside while baking, and can be used to hold tiny dishes of colourful dipping sauces.

*450g game (grouse, pheasant, partridge), meat only
125ml port or Madeira
110g dried raisins and currants, mixed
110g dried ready-to-eat prunes, chopped
salt and pepper*

*350g lean pork
225g rashers of bacon, lean and fat
½ tsp each grated nutmeg, cinnamon, ground cloves, mace, ginger and allspice
For the stock
1kg veal bones, chopped
carcasses from game (see above)
1 onion
1 carrot, sliced
1 bouquet garni
6 peppercorns
2 bay leaves
For the pastry
450g plain flour
1 tsp salt
225g lard
175ml water (see recipe)
1 egg yolk
1 beaten egg to glaze
1 egg yolk beaten with a good pinch of saffron for "endoring"*

Cut the game flesh into thin slices of approximately 5cm in length,

reserving trimmings. Marinate in the port or Madeira with the dried fruits and salt and pepper for a few hours. Roughly chop the game trimmings, pork and bacon, then stir in the spices and season well.

To make the stock, put all the ingredients into a large pan. Cover with water and bring to the boil, put a lid on and simmer for three hours. Strain into a clean pan, discarding bones and vegetables, and boil down until 300ml stock remains. Leave to cool, and season to taste.

To make the pastry, sift the flour and salt into a warmed mixing bowl and make a well in the centre. Place lard and water in a saucepan and bring to the boil. Pour immediately into the well, stirring vigorously (or use an electric mixer) then add the egg yolk, beating well and adjusting

amounts of flour and water if necessary to create a smooth dough. Turn out onto a floured board and, as soon as it is comfortable to handle, knead until pliable and soft. Do not use while still very hot, or the dough will collapse during shaping, and do not allow it to cool too much, as it will begin to harden. It should be pleasantly warm. Roll out two thirds of the pastry to a thickness of about 6mm (keep the rest, wrapped in plastic film in a warm place), and ease it quickly into the base and up the sides of a hinged mould, or an 18cm loose-based cake tin about 8 to 10cm deep.

Lift the game from the marinade and pat dry. Place half the pork and bacon mixture in the base of the pastry-lined mould and spoon over half the strained, dried, marinated fruits. Cover with

the sliced game and top with the remaining fruits. Cover with the rest of the pork mixture. Roll out the remaining dough and gently place on top of the pie. Press on firmly and trim any excess with a sharp knife. Decorate the edge and pinch to seal well. Make a central hole in the lid and embellish with pastry leaves or fleur-de-lys, using a little of the beaten egg glaze to stick them on. Glaze exposed pastry with beaten egg and place on a baking sheet. Bake for 20 minutes at 230°C/450°F/gas mark 8, then reduce heat to 160°C/325°F/gas mark 3, cover pie with foil and bake for a further three hours. Remove pie from oven and cool slightly before removing mould or tin. Brush all over with egg yolk and saffron mixture and return to the oven until glaze is set. Remove and allow to cool.

When the pie is almost cold, slowly pour into it as much of the cool stock as it will take. Leave for several hours in a cool place before serving, by which time the stock will have set to a jelly to fill any gaps.

Serves six to eight.

ENDORED GOOSE WITH "MADAME" STUFFING

"Sauce Madame" would have been poured over slices of cooked goose. Here the ingredients are used to make a stuffing instead.

4.5-5.5kg oven-ready goose
salt and pepper
2 egg yolks
large pinch each of saffron and ginger
For the stuffing
1 large quince or 4 tbsp quince jelly
a little oil and butter, if using fresh quince
2 tsp parsley, chopped
1 tsp thyme, chopped
1 tsp sage, chopped
pinch rosemary
large pinch ground ginger
½ tsp ground cinnamon
½ tsp grated nutmeg
3 hard pears, peeled and diced
1 clove garlic, crushed
75g seedless grapes, peeled
salt and pepper
red wine to bind

To make the stuffing, peel the quince, remove the seeds and dice the flesh. Cook in a little oil and butter over a high heat until golden. Leave to cool, then mix in all the remaining ingredients, adding seasoning to taste and just enough wine to bind the mixture. Spoon into the cavity of the goose and sew up the vent.

Place the goose on a wire rack in



The flavours and traditions of Christmas are echoes of our medieval past.

a roasting tin and prick the skin all over with a fork or sharp skewer. Season well with salt and pepper and cover with foil or greaseproof paper. Cook at 200°C/400°F/gas mark 6 for 30 minutes per kilogram, plus 20 minutes, until juices run clear. During cooking time pour off the accumulated fat from the roasting tin from time to time.

Remove from the oven and reduce heat to 160°C/325°F/gas mark 3. Beat egg yolks, saffron and ginger together and paint the glaze all over the goose. Return to the oven until the glaze is set.

Note: reserve the goose fat you pour off—it makes delicious roast potatoes.

Serves six to eight.

CROUSTARDE LUMBARDE

The finely shredded meat and hard-boiled eggs have been omitted from this recipe.

225g rich shortcrust pastry
75ml sweet white wine
600ml whipping or double cream
4 egg yolks
2-3 tsp sugar

1 blade mace (or pinch ground mace)
pinch ground ginger
1 cinnamon stick
1 clove
1 tsp saffron threads
110g dried dates, sliced
55g ready-to-eat dried prunes, sliced
55g dried figs, sliced

Roll out the pastry and use to line a deep 20cm flan dish, or six ramekins. Bake blind for 15 minutes at 220°C/425°F/gas mark 7. Put wine, cream, egg yolks, sugar and spices in the top of a double saucepan and cook gently, stirring, until starting to thicken. Allow to cool.

Place the dried fruits in the pastry case and strain over the cooled custard. Bake for 20-25 minutes at 180°C/350°F/gas mark 4 until custard is set.

Serves six.

CLARET JELLY

75g sugar
425ml water
1 cinnamon stick, broken into pieces
4 cloves
3 tbsp powdered gelatine
juice of 1 lemon
600ml claret
gold and silver leaf to decorate (optional)

Place sugar, water and spices in a saucepan, cover and bring slowly to the boil. Remove from heat and cool slightly. Sprinkle gelatine on to lemon juice in a cup, stand it in hot water to dissolve, then whisk it into mixture. Leave to stand for about 20 minutes then whisk again and strain into a large jug. Add the claret, pour into a wetted jelly mould and leave to set. Turn out and decorate with stripes of silver and gold leaf. Alternatively, the jelly can be set in a flat, deep tray and cubed or cut into shapes with cookie cutters before decorating.

Serves six.

HIPPOCRAS

The spices and sweetening are a matter of personal preference.

1 bottle good red wine
3-4 tbsp sugar
2 cinnamon sticks, broken
1 small piece ginger root, bruised
8 cloves
blade of mace
½ tsp grated nutmeg
5 cardamom seeds, bruised
a strip of orange peel

Put all the ingredients into a pan and slowly bring to simmering point, but do not allow to boil. Simmer very gently for 20 minutes, stirring occasionally. Strain and serve hot.

Serves four to six.

LAMBS' WOOL

4 eating apples, preferably russets
2.5 litres ale, or cider
6 cloves
1 tsp grated nutmeg
½ tsp ground ginger
3 whole allspice berries
1 cinnamon stick, broken
½ tsp cardamom seeds, bruised
1-2 tbsp sugar

Place the apples in a baking dish with a little ale, cider or water and bake for 30 minutes at 200°C/400°F/gas mark 6 until the flesh is "woolly" in texture. Meanwhile heat the ale or cider, spices and sugar in a large pan over a low heat until very hot but not boiling. Strain into a large bowl or heat-proof glasses. Scoop out the apple pulp with a spoon, removing pips, and pile on top of the hot ale.

Serves 12 to 18.

✿ Hand-painted Jester goblets (main picture) £14 each, made to order by Amanda Robinson (0171-228 7046).
✿ A Tudor Christmas in the Great Kitchens of Hampton Court Palace, Dec 27 to Jan 3. See That's Entertainment!

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Heaven scent

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► Compact binoculars from Carl Zeiss use the highest quality optics and multi-layer coating to give superb image brightness, brilliance and colour, yet are small enough to foldaway into a pocket or handbag. They are available in various magnifications and all feature high eye-point eyepieces to give a full field of view even when the user is wearing spectacles or sunglasses. A meticulous choice of materials, outstanding quality and long-term reliability make these compact binoculars an extra special gift.

For further information call Carl Zeiss Ltd, Binocular Division, telephone: 01707 871320.

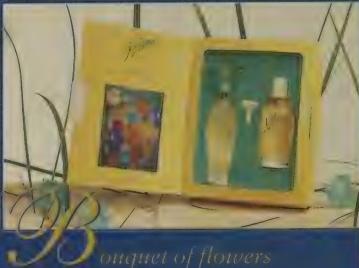


► The unique Castle Jigsaw Chess Table,

handmade by Heritage Tables in robust prime-grade kiln-dried English oak, is a beautiful heirloom, and much more than simply practical. Each piece of the base is an individual shape and size, and all of them interlock neatly into each other. So although primarily a chess table – it comes with a

complimentary handpainted chess set – or a coffee table, the Castle Table is also a giant block jigsaw – great fun at parties! *Heritage Tables, The Almoe, Seddon, Kent TN27 8QG, telephone: 01233 770415.*





Bonquet of flowers

► Nhang candle mousse by Lalique comes in beautiful faceted glass with delightful coloured flower shapes, which reflect its aquatic and oriental notes of water, jasmine, frangipani, vanilla and praline. When you buy a bouquet from the Nhang range, you will also receive a set of flowers.

candles, *at right*, in jewel colours, perfumed with the same exotic and relaxing scents. Fill your home with the heavenly fragrance—the perfect relaxing antidote to the rigours of Christmas shopping.
Nhang de Lalique, available from Lalique, 162 New Bond Street, London W1, tel: 0171-499 8226.



► Kim & Carter have been manufacturers of (bow) segementaries since the mid-19th century. Over the last 25 years they have put this specialist knowledge to work, resulting in an exclusive range of classic designs ranging from woven silks made in England. Their extensive range includes this Christmas design—just right for that special stocking present.
Kim & Carter, 39 St James's Street, London SW1. For mail order please telephone 01865 425697.



Italian chic

► Classic Italian accessory designer The Bridge has produced a new range of handbags. Handmade from hand-tooled cowhides, they come in various sizes, from carry-on shoulder bags to mini clutch bags, as well as bowler bags, and there is also a matching briefcase. With their innovative natural-cut edges and enduring good looks, these handbags are the perfect present—stylish and practical—and, as it is Christmas, why not complete your gift with one of these fun umbrellas with hand-carved decorative handles.
The Bridge, 53 Beauchamp Place, London SW1, tel: 0171-389 8055; also at Harrods, 87-135 Brompton Road, London SW1, tel: 0171-730 1234. For other stockists please telephone 0171-499 9294.

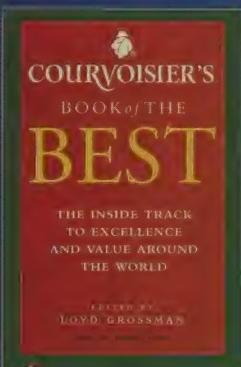


Perfect present solution

► Here it is, the perfect present for those who have everything. The Longchamp disk holder, made of cow leather, is both practical and stylish—ideal for a surprise Christmas stocking gift.
Longchamp disk holders available from Gallop, 16 Old Brompton Road, London SW7, telephone 0171-389 1734.

Simply the best

► Which is the best restaurant in Thailand? Which galleries are a must in New York? Where should you shop in Milan? *Courvoisier's Book of the Best* has marshalled the answers to these and myriad other questions. Under the guidance of traveller and connoisseur Lloyd Grossman, a team of over 200 celebrities, correspondents and international contributors offer entertaining comments and insights into the best-loved and little-known places to visit around the world.
Courvoisier's Book of the Best, published by Ebury Press, £14.99 (ref no 0091812 992); to order please see page 90.



Christmas cheer

► Port is an old favourite at Christmas but Sandeman Signature is a new blend made from the wines set aside when the House of Sandeman chose not to declare 1991 a vintage. The high quality of these wines has produced a first-class, vintage-character port, providing a deep rich ruby colour, full ripe fruit aromas bursting on the palate with richness and subtle nuances of red cherry and blackberry, and a mellow, lingering finish.





CHRISTMAS QUIZ

Forget the television, and settle down to a convivial afternoon of family guessing games.

TRUE OR FALSE?

Every Christmas needs a new board game, and this latest one is just the thing to keep the family from squabbling after a vinous lunch. Entitled "True or False?", it consists of a collection of cards containing statements which players must declare to be true or false. The game comes to Britain, freshly translated, from Sweden, where it has been bought by one of every 25 people. Put your brain and your wits against the statements on this page, starting with the following question: A Scandinavian game is set to become the number one best-seller in Britain for Christmas, 1996 – true or false?

Now answer True or False to these:

1 After the French Revolution Madame Tussaud, right, was put in prison, where she had to make wax models of aristocratic heads severed by the guillotine.



2 The longest and, perhaps, the most meaningless film in the world is the 48-hour-long British picture, *The Longest Mail Mosaic* Film in the Box, made in 1970.



12 When she was young, Sarah Bernhardt, above, had a morbid fascination with death. She bought a rosewood coffin which she used as a bed until her death in 1923 at the age of 78.



16 In 19th-century Paris some people found employment as dressers for naked snowmen.

17 Parts of the wooden horse used in the conquest of Troy were found by archaeologists as early as 1898.

18 During the French Revolution Louis XVI attempted to escape disguised as a volta, but he was recognised because of his crooked legs.

19 In the first Tarzan movie, made in 1918, all the apes were portrayed by American football players wearing monkey suits.

20 The nail of the index finger grows at a faster rate than that of other human nails.

21 Picasso's famous painting *Gernica*, below, was painted using special brushes made from the fur of baby rabbits.

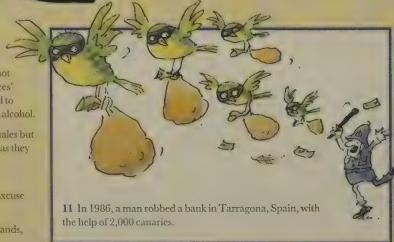
3 If you sing a middle A during a summer evening you risk having your mouth filled with male mosquitoes. When the female mosquito flutters her wings she produces that very note.

4 Henry Ford paid his workers a weekly wage of five dollars, but the cash was not handed over until his employee's private lives had been checked to ensure no money was spent on alcohol.

5 Oysters start their lives as males but slowly transform into females as they mature.

6 The inscription on Ernest Hemingway's grave reads: "Excuse me for not standing up."

7 Venice is built on 20 tiny islands, connected by 40 bridges.



11 In 1986, a man robbed a bank in Tarragona, Spain, with the help of 2,000 canaries.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY ANTHONY BURGESS



30 One of Mozart's piano pieces demands that the player uses his nose when his hands can't reach the key.

22 More than 2,000 years ago the Greek scientist Eratosthenes calculated the circumference of the earth by measuring the time that elapsed between the rising and the setting of the sun.

23 Two thousand years ago Palestinian fishing-nets were made of strong cobwebs.

24 Sir Winston Churchill's 90th-birthday gift from Parliament was his portrait, painted by Graham Sutherland. His wife later had it destroyed because they thought the picture made him look as if he were sitting on a commode.

25 The second hand on watches was introduced in England in the 18th century to help referees time the rounds in boxing matches.

26 Proportionately, female pandas, right, give birth to the largest babies of all mammals; a newborn panda can weigh more than 15kg.

27 In Thailand many elderly people find new partners at special discs for senior citizens. Recently a 115-year-old man met a future wife at one – she was aged 106.

28 All telephone numbers in American films and television series have the area code 555.

29 In ancient Greece a woman's age was counted not from her date of birth but from her wedding day.

30 The last time the sun sets the year ends in 2010.

31 The last time the sun rises the year begins in 2010.

32 The last time the sun sets the year ends in 2010.

33 The last time the sun rises the year begins in 2010.

34 The last time the sun sets the year ends in 2010.

35 The last time the sun rises the year begins in 2010.

32 The first Bloody Mary was mixed by Winston Churchill's mother, Jennie, as a tribute to her mother, Mary.

33 When it is frightened, an ostrich buries its head in the sand.

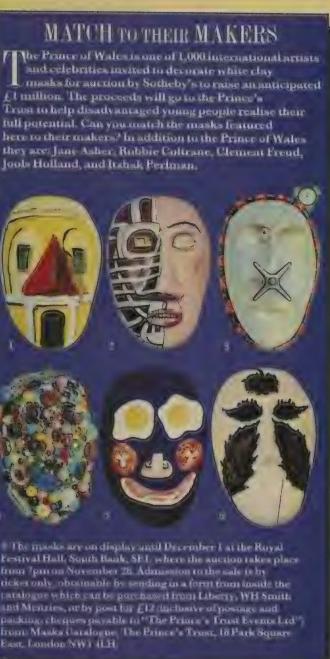
34 The Irish government once advertised for an equal-pay enforcement officer, offering a lower salary to any woman who got the job.

35 Elvis Presley had a twin brother.

"True or False?" is available from leading toy and department stores, price £24.99.



ANSWERS



The masks are on display until December 1 at the Royal Festival Hall, South Bank, SE1, where the auction takes place from 10am on Saturday 26 November. Admission to the sale is by ticket only, obtainable by sending in a form from the catalogue which can be purchased from Liberty, WH Smith and Mincies, or by post for £1 (indefinite postage and packing) to The Prince's Trust, 16 Park Square, East, London NW1 1NN.

10 The original title of the book was *True or False?* but the title was changed to *True or False? The Story of the World's Most Famous Board Game*. 11 The title of the book was changed to *True or False?* because the title of the game was already in use. 12 The title of the book was changed to *True or False?* because the title of the game was already in use. 13 The title of the book was changed to *True or False?* because the title of the game was already in use. 14 The title of the book was changed to *True or False?* because the title of the game was already in use. 15 The title of the book was changed to *True or False?* because the title of the game was already in use. 16 The title of the book was changed to *True or False?* because the title of the game was already in use. 17 The title of the book was changed to *True or False?* because the title of the game was already in use. 18 The title of the book was changed to *True or False?* because the title of the game was already in use. 19 The title of the book was changed to *True or False?* because the title of the game was already in use. 20 The title of the book was changed to *True or False?* because the title of the game was already in use. 21 The title of the book was changed to *True or False?* because the title of the game was already in use. 22 The title of the book was changed to *True or False?* because the title of the game was already in use. 23 The title of the book was changed to *True or False?* because the title of the game was already in use. 24 The title of the book was changed to *True or False?* because the title of the game was already in use. 25 The title of the book was changed to *True or False?* because the title of the game was already in use. 26 The title of the book was changed to *True or False?* because the title of the game was already in use. 27 The title of the book was changed to *True or False?* because the title of the game was already in use. 28 The title of the book was changed to *True or False?* because the title of the game was already in use. 29 The title of the book was changed to *True or False?* because the title of the game was already in use. 30 The title of the book was changed to *True or False?* because the title of the game was already in use. 31 The title of the book was changed to *True or False?* because the title of the game was already in use. 32 The title of the book was changed to *True or False?* because the title of the game was already in use. 33 The title of the book was changed to *True or False?* because the title of the game was already in use. 34 The title of the book was changed to *True or False?* because the title of the game was already in use. 35 The title of the book was changed to *True or False?* because the title of the game was already in use.



THAT'S ENTERTAINMENT!

FROM STAGE TO SCREEN, GALLERIES TO CONCERT HALLS

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DANCE

Christmas brings three versions of *The Nutcracker* from the visiting Kirov Ballet, from English National Ballet in their regular London season & the third from Birmingham Royal Ballet on their home ground. The Royal Ballet's rich programme at Covent Garden

comprises three major full-length ballets and two mixed bills, which include several of Kenneth MacMillan's fine legacies.

Adventures in Motion Pictures. Matthew Bourne's innovative company brings his Olivier-award-winning, revolutionary version of *Swan Lake*, with its all-male corps de ballet, to London's West End. Royal Ballet principal Adam Cooper alternates with William Kemp & Floyd Hendricks as the lead swan, with Scott Ambler/Ben Wright as the Prince. Until Jan 18. *Piccadilly Theatre, Piccadilly, W1* (0171-369 1734).

Caracalla Dance Theatre. The 30-strong company from Beirut presents *Elissa, Queen of Carthage*, based on the legend of *Dido & Aeneas*, which combines Western dance techniques with the poetry, folklore & heritage of the Middle East. Nov 12-16. *Peacock Theatre, Portugal St, Kingsway, WC2* (0171-314 8800).

City Ballet of London.

Harold King's new company in Matthew Hart's production of *Cinderella*, with his

additional choreography, danced to Prokofiev's score. Dec 16-Jan 4 (no performances Dec 24,25 & Jan 1). *Peacock Theatre*.

English National Ballet. The company's last season at the Festival Hall, before moving next year to the London Coliseum. Its new principal dancers, Zoltan Solyomosi, fugitive from the Royal Ballet, & Daria Klimentova, perform together for the first time, with Laurentiu Guinea as principal guest artist, in *The Nutcracker*, choreographed by Ben Stevenson. Dec 16-Jan 11. Ronald Hynd's production of *Coppelia* concludes the company's London season. Jan 13-18. *Festival Hall, South Bank Centre, SE1* (0171-960 4242).

★ HIGHLIGHT ★

Kirov Ballet. The St Petersburg company brings to London for the first time its sumptuous production of *The Nutcracker*, with a cast led by Farouk Ruzimatov, partnering the young star Diana Vishneva, Viktor Baranov & Igor Zelensky, both partnering Altynai Asylmuratova, Janna Ayupova & Anastasia Volochkova. Dec 17-Jan 4 (no performance Dec 25). *London Coliseum, St Martin's Lane, WC2* (0171-632 8300).

Bunty Matthias & Co. The eight dancers present a major new work, *Viewpoint*, to a soundtrack composed by Noel Watson in a set consisting of two vast interlocking staircases. Dec 6-8. *Queen Elizabeth Hall, South Bank Centre, SE1* (0171-960 4242).

Royal Ballet. *Romeo & Juliet*, Kenneth MacMillan's choreography to Prokofiev's score, with Sylvie Guillem & Jonathan Cope, Nov 5,14,16(m&e),20,28. *The Prince of the Pagodas*, MacMillan's last full-length ballet, set to Britten's score, with Darcey Bussell & Jonathan Cope, Nov 7,11,13,22,25, Dec 2. Ravel mixed bill: *La Valse & Daphnis & Chloe*, choreographed by Frederick Ashton, Christopher Wheeldon's *Pavane pour une infante défunte* & MacMillan's *La fin du jour*, Nov 8,19. Mixed programme:

Stepext, William Forsythe's ballet to music by Bach, a new work by Ashley Page, to music by Robert Moran & Prokofiev, *Winter Dreams*, MacMillan's interpretation of Chekhov's *Three Sisters*, to music by Tchaikovsky, Nov 26,30m,Dec 4,7,14,20. *Cinderella*, Ashton's first full-length ballet, dating from 1948, (in which he is famed as one of the Ugly Sisters, with Robert Helpmann as the other), with Darcey Bussell & Jonathan Cope dancing *Cinderella & the Prince*, Dec 17,18, 23,24m,27(m&e),28(m&e)31,Jan 4m. *Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, WC2* (0171-304 4000).

Sakoba: new moves in African dance, comprising *Travelling*, a solo by Bode Lawal, *Itu Sile*, for four dancers set to a sound & music collage by Tunde Jegede, *Junk/Junkie*, a solo with live contemporary percussion, & *Tw Tw*, a company finale inspired by the courtship dances of the Nigerian Tiv tribe. Nov 21,22. *Purcell Room, South Bank Centre, SE1* (0171-960 4242).

OUT OF TOWN

Birmingham Royal Ballet. Peter Wright's version of *The Nutcracker*, with its dazzling theatrical effects & magical stage wizardry, is seasonal fare. Nov 29-Dec 14. *Hippodrome, Birmingham* (0121-622 7486).

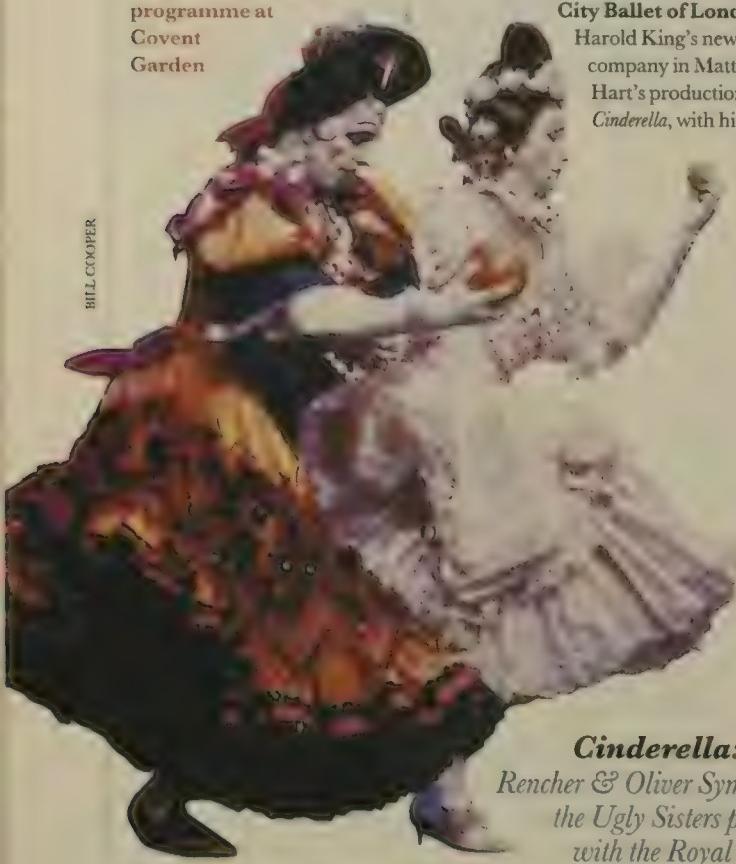
English National Ballet. Derck Deane's *Alice in Wonderland*, based on Lewis Carroll, designed by Sue Blane. Nov 18-23; *Mayflower, Southampton* (01703 711811). Nov 25-30; *Palace, Manchester* (0161-242 2503).

Northern Ballet Theatre. Massimo Morricone's choreography & Carl Davis' score bring Charles Dickens' *Christmas Carol* to the ballet stage, with designs by Lez Brotherton. Dec 3-7. *Grand Theatre, Leeds* (0113 245 9351).

Rambert Dance Company. Triple bills: Bruce's *Moonshine*, Cohan's *Stabat Mater*, Veldman's *Kol Simcha (Voice of Celebration)*, Nov 14-16; *New Theatre Cardiff* (1222 878899). Bruce's *Quicksilver*, Tudor's *Dark Elegies*, Brandstrup's new ballet *Eidolon*, Dec 4,5; world première of Bruce's *Stream*, music by Philip Chambon, *Moonshine*, *Kol Simcha*, Dec 6,7; *Theatre Royal, Plymouth* (01752 267222). Bruce's *Rooster & Swansong*, *Eidolon*; Dec 12-14, *Hippodrome, Bristol* (01179 299444).

Cinderella: Derek Rencher & Oliver Symons as the Ugly Sisters perform with the Royal Ballet.

BILL COOPER





The Nutcracker: Ben Stevenson's sparkling version for English National Ballet.

THEATRE

Andrew Lloyd Webber gambles on his big-budget revival of *Jesus Christ Superstar* being a winner, while *Guys & Dolls* at the National Theatre looks like a safe bet as an entertaining night-out. David Troughton digs deep into his pockets trying to save the doomed family in *The Cherry Orchard*. Enter the Christmas spirit with various spooks haunting Anthony Newley in *Scrooge* & Richard Briers in *A Christmas Carol*, or if you find

the festive season humbug, you may prefer the RSC's *Macbeth*.

Addresses & telephone numbers are given on the first occasion a theatre's entry appears.

Art. Sean Connery's wife was so impressed by Yasmina Reza's French comedy that she persuaded him to buy the rights for its British première. Christopher Hampton translates the play about three friends whose long-term friendship is thrown into turmoil when one of them buys a piece of modern art. Sam Mendes' production features Albert Finney, Tom Courtenay & Ken Stott as the troubled trio. Wyndham's, Charing Cross Rd, WC2 (0171-369 1736).

As You Like It. The RSC's London season of Stratford transfers begins with Steven Pimlott's straightforward staging of Shakespeare's delightful

comedy about the romantic tribulations of four couples in the Forest of Arden. The cast, dressed in Renaissance costume, look slightly adrift in a curious, minimalist set of stainless steel (ribbed aluminium for the court, metal pipes for the forest), but have a lot of charm. Niamh Cusack is a delightful Rosalind, Liam Cunningham a bland but well-spoken Orlando, & rising RSC stars Victoria Hamilton & Joseph Fiennes make amusing sparring partners as the shepherdess Phebe & the lovelorn Silvius. Barbican Theatre, Barbican, EC2 (0171-638 8891).

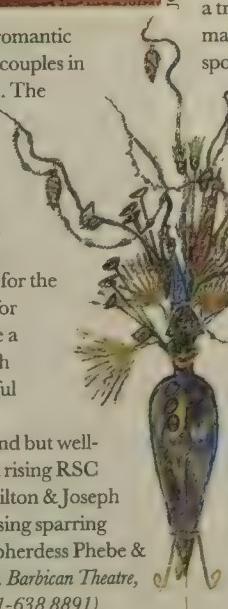


TREAT YOUR TREE TO A NEW LOOK

Why decorate your tree with the same old tired baubles when, with a little imagination, you could create a really knock-out arrangement. It needn't cost a fortune—all you require are original ideas. There are two places to head for inspiration. Every year the **Tate Gallery**, Millbank SW1, invites a well-known contemporary artist to design a tree for its entrance hall. Visitors in 1993 were astounded by Shirazeh Houshiary's upside-down tree with golden roots; and Cathy de Monchaux (picture above) and Cornelia Parker were the artists for the 1994 and 1995 trees. This year it's the turn of Julian Opie.

Meanwhile the **Festival of Trees** at Coutts & Co, 440 Strand WC2, will feature designer creations from companies such as Crabtree & Evelyn, Gucci, Bulgari, Armani and Asprey, in addition to a tree by Sir Terence Conran made especially for the event's sponsor, Andersen Consulting.

The 12 stunning trees, which will include an Egyptian design from Harrods (left) and an Imelda Marcos-inspired Shoe Tree from Simpson, will be exhibited from November 28 until December 4 before being auctioned at a gala dinner in aid of Save the Children. Visitors may enter Coutts's reception area during banking hours or view the trees through the building's glass front at other times.



Aladdin:
Bonnie Langford
& Bernard
Cribbins in the
Richmond
Theatre
pantomime.

O COME, ALL YE FAITHFUL

Peter and Ann Hutley, owners of Wintershall, staged the first of their productions of the Nativity "as an act of faith and love" in 1990. Since then, increasing numbers of people have sought out this annual antidote to the increasing commercialisation of Christmas. Different generations take part, down to the family donkey, who has borne Mary stoically up the hill for the last five years.

of a marriage, with Janet McTeer as the dissatisfied wife who learns to exert her independence & Owen Teale as her uncomprehending husband. *Playhouse, Northumberland Ave, WC2 (0171-839 4401).*

Guys & Dolls. The National's Christmas treat is a revival of Richard Eyre's hugely successful 1982 production of the 50s Broadway musical hit. Based on Damon Runyon's New York stories of genial hoodlums & vocational gamblers, it bristles with witty dialogue & catchy song (including "Luck be a Lady" & "Sit Down, You're Rocking the Boat"). A promising cast includes Imelda Staunton as showgirl Miss Adelaide, engaged to marriage-shy Nathan Detroit (Henry Goodman) who's after a venue for his crap game, & Clarke Peters as gambler Sky Masterson, who courts a Salvation Army girl (Joanna Riding) for a bet. Opens Dec 16. *Olivier, National Theatre.*

Moving in procession up the steep slope, the route lit by flaming torches, spectators pass shepherds guarding their flocks, and espy Joseph and Mary trudging uphill towards them. Denied room at the inn, the holy couple enter the comparative snugness of the Holly Barn, where members of the audience follow, and perch on wooden planks to watch the ancient story unfold. Local actors (the youngest playing the

Death of A Salesman. David Thacker has become a kind of evangelist for Arthur Miller's work, having staged more of his

plays than any other director. Now he tackles probably Miller's best-known drama, the moving account of how once-successful salesman Willy Loman is destroyed by the success ethic of the American Dream. Alun Armstrong plays the self-deluding Willy, with Marjorie Yates as his wife & Mark Strong as his idolising son, Biff.

Thacker has occasionally been over-reverential with Miller, but he always draws fine performances from his cast. *Lyttelton Theatre, National Theatre, South Bank, SE1 (0171-928 2252).*

A Doll's House. Irish playwright Frank McGuinness provides a new version of Ibsen's celebrated portrait

An Ideal Husband. Peter Hall's stylish production of Oscar Wilde's play about political corruption involving the blackmailing of a London diplomat. With David Robb, David Rintoul Diane Fletcher, Deborah Grant, John McCallum & Googie Withers. *Old Vic, Waterloo Rd, SE1 (0171-928 7616).*

Jesus Christ Superstar. The Tim Rice/Andrew Lloyd Webber rock opera, in a regenerated production, lights up one of London's long-lost theatres. Opens Nov 19. *Lyceum, Wellington St, WC2 (0171-656 1807).* See feature on page 42.

John Gabriel Borkman. Ibsen's potentially gloomy 1879 play about a disgraced banker who still dreams of financial glory & the emotional

The Cherry Orchard:
Alec McCowen, David Troughton & Penelope Wilton impressive in Chekhov.

By Jeeves! Alan Ayckbourn & Andrew Lloyd Webber have reworked their 1975 flop, about P.G. Wodehouse's unflappable manservant (nicely supercilious Malcolm Sinclair) sorting out the mishaps of his marriage-fearing master Bertie Wooster (jolly Steven Pacey), into a winning entertainment. Ayckbourn's direction ensures the cast handle the farcical moments with skill, & Lloyd Webber's pastiche score is a delight. *Lyric, Shaftesbury Ave, WI (0171-494 5045).*

★ HIGHLIGHT ★

The Cherry Orchard. Chekhov's chronicle of social change, in which a privileged family on a country estate refuse to face up to the encroaching industrial age, can be funny as well as moving. Adrian Noble's elegant RSC production lets the characters dominate, rather than the atmosphere. Penelope Wilton is touching as the mercurial, matriarchal head & Alec McCowen effectively infuriating as her spendthrift brother. Most impressive of all is David Troughton's self-made businessman of peasant stock who tries to save them from ruin. Nov 21-Jan 25. *Albery, St Martin's Lane, WC2 (0171-369 1730).*

RONALD COOPER



infant Jesus), musicians, singers and a children's choir—not to mention donkeys, ponies, cattle and goats—convey the Christmas message with simplicity and directness. The shepherds bring their lambs to marvel at the scene, the Kings arrive on horseback, and Herod makes an entrance with his soldiers to a tirade of hisses and boos. The “inn” (under canvas) opens for tea and mince pies an hour before the performance.

Wintershall Nativity, Dec 19, 20, 7pm; Dec 21–23, 4.30pm. Apply early for tickets, by sending an sae for details to: *Wintershall Nativity*, Estate Office, Wintershall, Bramley, Guildford GU5 0LR. Profits go to cancer charities.



PENNY TWEEDIE



DONALD COOPER

As You Like It: Liam Cunningham as Orlando & Niamh Cusack as Rosalind.

maelstrom caused by his actions is made moving & humorously ironic in Richard Eyre's superlative revival. Paul Scofield is compelling in the title role, with strong support from Eileen Atkins as his embittered wife & Vanessa Redgrave as her sister who once loved him. An absorbing production of tension & wit. Until Dec 21. *Lyttelton, National Theatre*.

Kindertransport. Diane Samuels' moving play concerns a Jewish girl who is sent from Germany to England in 1938. Cleverly blending past & present, it explores not only the guilt experienced by these evacuated children but also the tensions between mothers & daughters. Jean Boht is excellent as the girl's adoptive mother & Julia Malewski & Diana Quick are moving as, respectively, the young

and grown-up evacuee. *Vaucluse, Strand, WC2* (0171-836 9987).

Laughter on the 23rd Floor. Pop-eyed Hollywood actor Gene Wilder makes his British stage debut in Neil Simon's comedy about a group of gag writers working for America's top TV comic in 1953, during the McCarthy witch hunts. Although Wilder is a little dull as the morose TV star & the play is essentially a stream of one-liners, it's still often very funny. *Queen's, Shaftesbury Ave, W1* (0171-494 5040).

Macbeth. Director Tim Albery's austere approach raises some interesting ideas but drains all passion out of one of Shakespeare's most full-blooded tragedies. Played out on a bleakly functional set with a distracting mix of costumes & over-emphatic lighting, it is less about the lust for power & more a psychological study of the envy & emptiness felt by a childless couple. Unfortunately there is little sense of a marital past between Roger Allam's dull thane & Brid

Brennan's shrill Lady Macbeth, leaving the evening's most memorable moments to Adrian Schiller's hilarious Porter. Opens Nov 6. *Barbican Theatre, Barbican*.

Nine. American composer-lyricist Maury Yeston became fascinated with Federico Fellini's semi-autobiographical 1963 film *8½*, & wanted to turn it into a musical. It took him, rather appropriately, nine years to make it to Broadway, in 1982. The story focuses on a celebrated but tormented director who has come to a Venetian spa, where he reflects on the relationships with his wife, mistress, producer, protégé & mother. David Leveaux directs the London première of this dream-like, impressionistic musical. Dec 12–Mar 8. *Donmar Warehouse, Earlham St, WC2* (0171-369 1732).

The Oedipus Plays. The use of a masked cast in Peter Hall's ritualistic staging of Sophocles' Greek tragedies *Oedipus the King* & *Oedipus at Colonus* is hauntingly effective & never stilted or purely picturesque. Alan Howard leads a strong cast as the Theban ruler doomed to kill his father & marry his mother. Until Nov 30. *Olivier, National Theatre*.

Talking Heads. Alan Bennett directs two of his own monologues originally written for television in 1989. Maggie Smith is funny & touching as the neglected vicar's wife who finds a vision of God at the local off-licence, & Margaret Tyzack is moving as a stockbroker's widow who finds life has stripped her of most of her assets. *Comedy, Panton St, SW1* (0171-369 1731).

War & Peace. Staging Tolstoy's epic novel about a Russian family during the Napoleonic wars with a cast of only 15 & a few props may seem like folly,

but Shared Experience's 4 ½-hour adaptation is a triumph. It's a fluidly choreographed production that focuses on the spiritual & moral journeys of the characters, offering a succession of stylish & stylised theatrical moments. Until Dec 5. *Cottesloe, National Theatre*.

Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?

Howard Davies directs a superb revival of Edward Albee's emotionally bruising 1962 drama about a warring campus couple. Diana Rigg is excellent as the unstable wife, but David Suchet impresses most as the tight-lipped husband who slugs it out in an all-night drinking bout in which no punches are pulled. A tense & gripping production. Opens Nov 6. *Aldwych Theatre, Aldwych, WC2* (0171-416 6003).

RECOMMENDED LONG RUNNERS

Blood Brothers, *Phoenix* (0171-369 1733). **Buddy,** *Strand* (0171-930 8800). **Cats,** *New London* (0171-405 0072). **Grease,** *Cambridge* (0171-494 5054). **An Inspector Calls,** *Garrick* (0171-494 5085). **Jolson,** *Victoria Palace* (0171-834 1317). **Les Misérables,** *Palace* (0171-434 0909). **Miss Saigon,** *Theatre Royal, Drury Lane* (0171-494 5000). **The Mousetrap,** *St Martin's* (0171-836 1443). **Oliver!** *London Palladium* (0171-494 5020). **The Phantom of the Opera,** *Her Majesty's* (0171-494 540). **Starlight Express,** *Apollo Victoria* (0171-416 6070). **Sunset Boulevard,** *Adelphi* (0171-344 0055). **The Woman in Black,** *Fortune* (0171-494 5085).

OUT OF TOWN
RSC season at Stratford: At the Royal Shakespeare Theatre: **Much Ado About Nothing**, with Alex Jennings as Benedick & Siobhan

Macbeth: Brid Brennan & Roger Allam as the murderous spouses.



DONALD COOPER



The Van: Two Dubliners set up a "chippy", left, to feed World Cup football fans. **The Craft:** Four female students with problems resort to witchcraft, right.

18 & then to the public, Dec 7, 14, 20-21. *Orange Tree*, 1 Clarence St, Richmond, Surrey (0181-940 3623).

The Wizard of Oz. Musical staging based on the Judy Garland film. Nov 21-Feb 8. *Poll's*, 240 The Broadway, Wimbledon, SW19 (0181-543 4880).

CINEMA

Groom's Hell, SE10 (0181-859 7755). **Mother Goose**, Ronnie Corbett leads the cast. Dec 12-Jan 19. *Churchill*, Bromley, Kent (0181-460 6677).

Pinocchio. The magical tale of a wooden puppet who longs to be a real boy. Nov 16-Jan 18. *Unicorn Theatre*, Great Newport St, WC2 (0171-853 6334).

Ron Hood & the Babes in the Wood. With Paul Nicholas as Robin, Jane Daniell as Maid Marian, Forbes Collins as the Sheriff of Nottingham. Dec 14-Jan 26. *Wimborne Theatre*, 93 The Broadway, SW19 (0181-540 0362).

Robin Hood or The Foresters' Fete. A traditional Victorian pantomime performed in one of London's last music halls. Dec 4-Feb 16. *Players' Theatre*, The Arches, Villiers St, WC2 (0171-839 1134).

Scrooge. Anthony Newley takes the lead in a revival of Leslie Bricusse's musical version of *A Christmas Carol*. Nov 12-Feb 1. *Dominion*, Tottenham Court Rd, W1 (0171-416 6052).

Snow White & the Seven Dwarfs. With Anna Dolson, Bill Maynard & Karen Worth. Dec 13-Jan 4. *Young Vic*, The Cut, SE1 (0171-928 6363).

Beauty & the Beast. A riotous adaptation of the old tale. Opens Dec 11. *Theatre Royal*, Stratford East, Gerty Ratfink Sq, E15 (0181-334 0310).

A Christmas Carol. Richard Briers as Dickens' reformed miser in Neil Bartlett's production. Dec 12-Jan 18. *Lyric Hammersmith*, King St, W6 (0181-741 2311).

Huckleberry Finn. New adaptation of the Mark Twain adventure. Dec 6-Jan 25. *Greeneck Theatre*.

community. Morale is strengthened by the arrival on the flagblown of a granddaughter (Tara Fitzgerald) of a former bandleader & former sweetheart of a player (Fitzwarren). **Relativity.** With the Christmas holidays looming, family attractions include the new Disney live-action version of *101 Dalmatians*, & Roald Dahl's *Matilda*, directed by Danny DeVito, featuring a delightful performance by Mara Wilson.

American Buffalo. In Michael Corrente's film of David Mamet's three-handled play, adapted by its author, Dustin Hoffman is the shifty, profane callow on a junkshop dealer (Dennis Franz) & tries to take over the minor heist of a coin collection his friend was planning with his willing young shop assistant (Sean Nelson). Then amity is subdued by greed. Hoffman's performance has echoes of his sleazy portrayal of Rato Rizzo in *Midnight Cowboy*, but Mamet's theatrical dialogue with its mannered repetitions sounds odd on screen. Opens Nov 22.

Beautiful Girls. Ted Demme's affecting study of young people in a Massachusetts small town finding themselves sliding into monotonous routine lives in a well-acted ensemble work; with Timothy Hutton, Matt Dillon, Lauren Holly & Annabeth Gish in the large cast. Opens Nov 29.

Brassed Off! Pit closures in Yorkshire threaten a small village where Pete Postlethwaite leads the brass band, which somehow symbolises the well-being of the



Brassed Off? Mary Healy & Sue Johnston endure Yorkshire village life.



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The Craft. Four disparate Los Angeles female students (Robin Tunney, Fairuza Balk, Rachel True, Neve Campbell), each with a troubled background & deemed outsiders by their peers, turn to witchcraft to cement their friendship & to wreak revenge on their enemies. Andrew Fleming's film dips into the world of Hollywood design-occult produces a series of spectacular special effects if not much else. Opens Nov 8.

Dracula Dead & Loving It. Mel Brooks returns to a send-up of the horror genre, so thoroughly mocked in

Young Frankenstein. Leslie Nielsen plays the count who flees to England after centuries in his Transylvanian cellar. Others in the familiar story include Peter MacNichol as Renfield, Steven Weber as Jonathan Harker, Amy Yabeck as his fiancée, Mina, & Lysette Anthony as her voluptuous friend, Lucy, while the vampire killer Van Helsing is played by Brooks himself. The blood flows as thickly as the jokes. Opens Nov 29.

Fires Were Club. Gothic Hawn. Bette Midler & Diana Keaton are the stars of this comedy-drama, set on the island of the troubled island. Liam Neeson has considerable star power as Collins, & is well supported by Aidan Quinn, Stephen Rea, Alan Rickman, as a sterey & cuningue De Valera, & Julia Roberts. Set-piece scenes, such as the sieges of the GPO & the Four Courts, are vividly depicted, & there is a sense of the sweep of history. Opens Nov 8.

Mr Reliable. Colin Friels plays a small-time Australian criminal who decides to go straight & converts a suburban shack into a home for himself, his girlfriend & child. Two cops call early one morning to ask about some missing documents & misunderstand his reluctance to open up, believe that he is holding the woman & child hostage. Soon a siege develops, with police hit squads,

television & press reporters & eager sightseers surrounding the humble dwelling. It goes on for days, neither side able to back down without looking foolish. Nadia Tass's fine comedy is based on a true story. Opens Nov 22.

101 Dalmatians. Glenn Close plays the bad-tempered harpie Cruella De Vil, owner of a fashion house, with Judy Richardson as her best designer, who, much to her annoyance, marries. Neil Daniels, Cruella tries to buy a litter of Dalmatian pups from the newlyweds & is rebuffed, so she sends a pair of henchmen to steal them. The entire dog world then rallies to thwart her. Disney's ambitious, action-filled, hilarious live-action version of a favourite cartoon is directed by Stephen Herek. Opens Dec 13.

The Phantom. Another decent comic-strip hero is resurrected for the screen, in this case "the ghost who walks" created by Lee Falk in 1936. He is played in man's fashions by Billy Zane, with Treat Williams as the villain Xander Drax, & Catherine Zeta-Jones as Vicki Vale. The Phantom's alter ego, Kit Walker, is the love of Diana Palmer, Kristie Swanson, who in the tradition of such heroes fails to make the connection with the super-hero. Simon Wincer's direction piles on the thrills. Opens Nov 22.

Roald Dahl's Matilda. Mara Wilson plays the gifted little girl. Matilda whose genius her parents (Danny DeVito & Rhea Perlman) fail to appreciate. She is sent to an awful boarding school ruled by a terrifying child-beater (Pam Ferris) but finds a friend in a kind teacher (Embeth Davidz) who encourages her to fight back against the nasty grown-ups. Danny DeVito also directed & very capably brings out the darker side of Dahl, which always gave his children's stories a special poignancy. Opens Dec 20.

Surviving Picasso. This Merchant Ivory production is based on the account of Picasso's mistress. **Roald Dahl's Matilda:** Mara Wilson as the child genius who has a hard time.



Franoise Gilot (played by Natasha McElhone), of the frenetic years she spent with the artist between 1943 & 1953. Picasso is played by Anthony Hopkins, with Joan Plowright as Gilot's grandmother, Jane Lapostolle as Picasso's wife Olga, who lost her mind, Diane Venora as his second wife, & Jane Harker & Julianne Moore as other mistresses. The screenplay by Ruth Prawer Jhabvala rewards her collaboration with the director James Ivory. Opens Nov 15 **True Blue.** After 10 consecutive years of wins over Cambridge, Oxford lost the 1986 Boat Race. In

the following year five American crews were brought in to wreak revenge, but bitter arguments ensued over Dan Topolski's training methods, & a "mummy" occurred only weeks before the next historic encounter with the Light Blues. A new crew then had to fight against the odds. Ferdinand Pichler's film, with its sub-Vangelis score by Stavas Saryrou, attempts to capture the spirit of *Chariots of Fire*, with Topolski playing the title Leyton.

The Thin Red Line. Terence Nunn's cast is formidable. Ben Kingsley as Frost, Nigel Hawthorne as Malahide, Richard E. Grant as Sir Andrew Aguecheek, the ever-improving Helena Bonham Carter as Ophelia, Imogen Stubbs as Viola, plus Mr Smith, Isabella Stannion & John Stephens. Filmed on location in Cornwall, Shakespeare's convicly of a mix-up between identical twins has a dark side which Nunn brings out in his sensitively controlled Pre-Raphaelite vision within a 1920s setting.

The Van. In the third film based on Roddy Doyle's Barrytown trilogy Colm Meaney & Donal O'Reilly, both unemployed, renovate a "chippy" van to offer sustenance to fans fleeing from



ZOE DOMINIC

Turandot: The Royal Opera's spectacular staging, left, designed by Sally Jacobs. **La traviata:** Paul Nilon & Judith Howarth, right, in Glyndebourne Touring Opera's enjoyable production.

★ HIGHLIGHT ★

Die Soldaten. Zimmermann's opera gets its first British production, directed by David Freeman & conducted by Elgar Howarth. Based on a story by Lenz, it tells of Marie, sung by Lisa Saffer, a merchant's daughter, & her decline into prostitution & penury. Nov 19, 23, 26, 28, Dec 5, 10, 12.

The Mikado. Jonathan Miller's highly entertaining and long-running transformation of Gilbert & Sullivan's *japonaiserie*. Dec 9, 11, 14 (m&e).

MILLENNIUM OPERA

The Place Theatre, 17 Duke's Rd, WC1 (0171-387 0031).

The Master & Margarita. A new opera by Darryl Way, based on the novel by Mikhail Bulgakov. Nov 12-16.

ROYAL OPERA

Covent Garden, WC2 (0171-304 4000).

Don Giovanni. Thomas Allen & Ferruccio Furlanetto (from Nov 18) sing the title role in two succeeding casts for Johannes Schaaf's staging, with Yvonne Kenny/Christine Brewer as Anna, Felicity Lott/Solveig Kringelborn as Elvira, Alison Hagley/Christiane Oelze as Zerlina, Lucio Gallo/Franz Hawlat as Leporello. Dietrich Bernet conducts. Nov 1, 4, 6, 9, 12, 15, 18, 21, 23, 27, 29, Dec 5.

Tosca. Russian soprano Galina Gorchakova sings the tragic heroine,

with Keith Olsen as Cavarossi &

OPERA

the pub after watching Ireland play in the 1990 World Cup. For a time euphoria reigns but the pair's fortunes wane once the team is out, & they find themselves faced with irate customers & unyielding officials. Stephen Frears, who also directed the second of the three films, *The Snapper*, conveys the atmosphere of working-class North Dublin. Opens Nov 15.

When the Cat's Away. A girl, going off on holiday, leaves her cat with an eccentric old biddy who minds animals in her Paris flat. On the girl's return the feline is missing. They join forces to find it. The old woman has her own neighbourhood network & the young woman, whose personal life is hopelessly disorganised, makes many new friends in her arrondissement. Cedric Klapisch's comedy is a sweet delight, recalling the old street-life Paris that flourished in René Clair's films.

Garance Clavel is a fresh-faced lead.

Don Giovanni: James Meek & Penelope Shaw in the Travelling Opera production.

KATHY SAUNDERS

It's a Jonathan Miller season at English National Opera where his new production of *La traviata* is doing good business and his ever-popular stagings of *Rigoletto* and *Mikado* return to the repertory at the Coliseum. The company also gives the British première of *Die Soldaten* by the early-20th-century German composer Bernd-Alois Zimmermann. Covent Garden revives two Puccini favourites, *Tosca* & *Turandot*, with Russian & American sopranos singing the lead roles. Glyndebourne Touring Opera continues its autumn perambulations.

ENGLISH NATIONAL OPERA
London Coliseum, St Martin's Lane, WC2 (0171-632 8300).

La traviata. Jonathan Miller's new production of Verdi's opera based on Dumas' novel *The Lady of the Camellias*, has revealed a marvellous new

Violetta in Rosa Mannion; John Hudson & Christopher Robertson as Alfredo & Giorgio Germont give strong support in a

finely balanced performance; Noel Davies conducts. Nov 1, 7, 15.

Rigoletto. Yet another revival of Jonathan Miller's successful staging, set in the milieu of the New York Mafia, which turns the hunch-backed jester into a seedy barman, played by Peter Sidhom; Janice Watson sings his daughter, Gilda, Bonaventura Bottone & Julian Gavin share the role of the Duke/Mafia boss. Nov 2, 5, 8, 16, 20, 22, 27, 30, Dec 3, 6.

The Cunning Little Vixen. Lesley Garrett is endearingly vulnerable & wilful as Janáček's heroine in David Pountney's fine production; Richard Hickox conducts. Nov 6, 9, 14, 18.

The Pearl Fishers. Bizet's romantic tragedy, best known for its lyrical tenor-baritone duet, to be sung here by John Hudson & Ashley Holland, with Mary Plazas as Leïla, whom both fishermen love. Nov 29, Dec 4, 7, 13.

GOLD AND SILVER CELEBRATIONS

A Gold and Silver Gala to be held at the Royal Opera House on December 12 will mark the 50th anniversary of the first performance given by the Covent Garden opera company and the 25th anniversary of the tenor Plácido Domingo's debut at Covent Garden. The birth of the opera company which was later to become the Royal Opera was marked by a joint performance with Sadler's Wells Ballet, on December 12, 1946, of Purcell's hybrid work *The Fairy Queen*.

In the intervening half century Covent Garden has given the world premières of operas by Britten, Tippett, Birtwistle and Goehr; British premières of works by Berg, Stockhausen and Berio; six cycles of Wagner's *Ring* have been staged, the latest this autumn; and great singers who have performed there include Maria Callas, Joan Sutherland, Luciano Pavarotti, Kiri Te Kanawa, Jose Carreras and Plácido Domingo.

Domingo made his debut at Covent Garden on December 8, 1971, singing the role of the painter Cavaradossi in Puccini's *Tosca*, one of his most notable portrayals. As part of his three-fold silver jubilee celebrations he will conduct the performance of *Tosca* to be given on December 9.

In the past 25 years Domingo has become established as the foremost lyrical dramatic tenor of his day. He has appeared at the Royal Opera House in most of the leading tenor roles in the Italian repertory: Puccini's Rodolfo, Calaf and Dick Johnson, both Turiddu and Canio in *Cavalleria Rusticana*



BILL RAFFERTY
DONALD COOPER

James Morris as Scarpia in one of the company's longest-serving productions. Edward Downes/Plácido Domingo (Dec 9) conducts. Nov 30, Dec 3, 9, 11.

Die Walküre. Plácido Domingo sings Siegmund, his first Wagner role in London, in a special performance to mark his silver jubilee, with Anne Evans as Sieglinde, Matthias Hölle as Hunding, John Tomlinson as Wotan, Deborah Polaski as Brünnhilde. Dec 6.

Turandot. Sharon Sweet sings the princess, with Giuseppe Giacomini as Calaf, in Andrei Serban's powerful production; Daniele Gatti conducts. Dec 10, 13, 16, 19, 21, 30, Jan 2, 6.

TRAVELLING OPERA

Barbican Hall, EC2 (0171-638 8891).

Don Giovanni. New production by Giles Block, with James Meek singing the title role. Jan 3.

La traviata. Directed by Peter Knapp. Jan 4, 5.

OUT OF TOWN

ENGLISH TOURING OPERA

The Pearl Fishers. New production by Caroline Gawn, conducted by Andrew Greenwood, with Jeffrey Stewart as Nadir, Adrian Clarke as Zurga, Sandra Zeltzer as Leïla. **Rigoletto.** Gerard Quinn & Matthew Elton Thomas alternate in the role of the jester.

Marlowe, Canterbury (01227 787787); Nov 5-9. *Opera House, Buxton* (01298 72190); Nov 12-16. *Anvil, Basingstoke* (01256 844244); Nov 19-23. *King's Theatre, Southsea* (01705 828282); Nov 25, 26. *Lyceum, Crewe* (01270 537333); Nov 28-30. *Swan, High Wycombe* (01494 512000); Dec 3-7.

GLYNDEBOURNE TOURING OPERA

La traviata. Judith Howarth makes an impressive company debut as Violetta, with Paul Nilon as an ardent Alfredo, sensitively directed by Aidan

Lang; Ivor Bolton conducts.

Le nozze di Figaro. Stephen Medcalf directs this revival of the production which opened the new Glyndebourne opera house in 1994. Umberto Chiummo sings the title role, with Claron McFadden as Susanna, Julie Unwin as Countess Almaviva, William Dazeley as the Count; Richard Farnes conducts.

Theodora. Peter Sellars' restless staging of Handel's oratorio from this year's Glyndebourne Festival, with Anne Dawson as the martyred Theodora, Christopher Robson as Didymus; Harry Bicket conducts. **Apollo, Oxford** (01865 244544); Nov 5-9. **Theatre Royal, Norwich** (01603 630000); Nov 12-16. **Theatre Royal, Plymouth** (01752 267222); Nov 19-23. **New Victoria, Woking** (01483 761144); Nov 26-30. **Palace, Manchester** (0161-242 2503); Dec 3-7.

OPERA FACTORY

Grand, Blackpool (01253 28372).

The Magic Flute. David Freeman's fourth Mozart production for the company is set in a circus ring, to little practical purpose but much agitation. Nicholas Kok conducts, with Andrew Burden as Tamino, Thora Einarsdóttir as Pamina, Richard Chew as Papageno. Nov 24, 25.

OPERA NORTH

Madama Butterfly. Dalia Ibelhauptaite directs, with Chen Sue as Cio-Cio San, Mark Nicolson as Pinkerton; Marco Zambelli conducts.

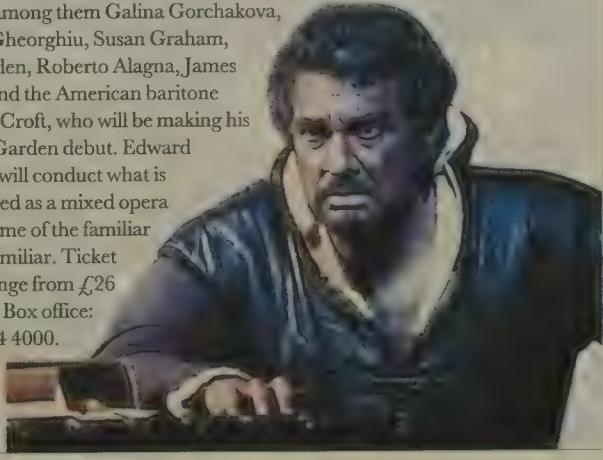
Iphigenia in Aulis. Lynne Dawson is Iphigenia in Tim Hopkins' staging, with Della Jones as Clytemnestra; Valentin Reymond conducts. *Lyceum, Sheffield* (0114 276 9922); Nov 7-9.

The Marriage of Figaro. Caroline Gawn's production, conducted by Paul Goodwin, with Mary Hegarty as Susanna, Richard Whitehouse as Figaro, Janis Kelly as the Countess, Roderick Williams as the Count.

rusticana and *Pagliacci*, many Verdi roles including most recently Stiffelio

and most memorably Otello, below, probably the performance for which he is held in the greatest esteem. In the French repertory he has been an outstanding Samson, Don José, Hoffmann and Vasco da Gama. In recent years he has become familiar to a much wider audience through the summer big-screen relays in the Covent Garden Piazza. Now, for his silver celebration, he will sing a single performance of Siegmund in *Die Walküre*, his first Wagner role in London, on December 6.

For the Gold and Silver Gala he will be joined by other international singers, among them Galina Gorchakova, Angela Gheorghiu, Susan Graham, Jane Eaglen, Roberto Alagna, James Morris and the American baritone Dwayne Croft, who will be making his Covent Garden debut. Edward Downes will conduct what is announced as a mixed opera programme of the familiar and unfamiliar. Ticket prices range from £26 to £550. Box office: 0171-304 4000.



JOE DOMINGO

The Cunning Little Vixen: Lesley Garrett as the Vixen for English National.

Wozzeck. Andrew Shore sings the title role, with Josephine Barstow as Marie, in Deborah Warner's vivid production of Berg's harrowing work, conducted by Paul Daniel.

Also **Madama Butterfly.** New Theatre, Hull (01482 226655); Nov 12-16.

SCOTTISH OPERA

Theatre Royal, Glasgow (0141-332 9000).

Ines de Castro. James MacMillan's new opera which tells of the murder of the 14th-century Spanish mistress of the Crown Prince of Portugal during a period of hostility between Spain & Portugal, conducted by Richard Armstrong. Nov 2, 7.

Il trovatore. The troubador is sung by the Chinese tenor Deng, Leonora, whom he loves, by Penelope Walmsley-Clark, in Karen Howard's production. Nov 6, 9, 12, 14, 16.

Festival Theatre, Edinburgh (0131-529 6000). Nov 19-23.

Also **The Pearl Fishers**, concert performance. *Theatre Royal, Newcastle* (0191-232 2061). Nov 26-30.

WELSH NATIONAL OPERA

Don Giovanni. Katie Mitchell directs an admired new production with Davide Damiani as Giovanni, Cara O'Sullivan as Anna, Alwyn Mellor as Elvira, Arwel Huw Morgan as Leporello; Carlo Rizzi/Anthony Negus conducts.

La Bohème. Mariss Jansons conducts, with Rosalind Sutherland & Carlo Ventre as Mimi & Rodolfo.

The Doctor of Myddfai. Peter Maxwell Davies' new opera based on a mythical Welsh folk story, with Paul Whelan & Gwynne Howell. *Mayflower, Southampton* (01703 711811); Nov 12-16. **Hippodrome, Bristol** (0117-929 9444); Nov 19-23. **Empire, Liverpool** (0151-709 1555); Nov 26-30.

MUSIC

International opera stars Kiri Te Kanawa and José Carreras both give concerts at the Albert Hall. Visiting orchestras from Buenos Aires & San Francisco appear at the Barbican Hall, & Solti conducts the Vienna Philharmonic at the Festival Hall. Highlights of the season will be pianists Alfred Brendel & Maurizio Pollini's performances of Beethoven. Hungarian pianist András Schiff directs a Brahms festival at the Wigmore Hall. Plus concerts of Christmas music & carols.

ALBERT HALL

Kensington Gore, SW7 (0171-589 8212).

The Royal Concert. Daniele Gatti conducts the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra in Beethoven's Overture *Coriolanus* & Piano Concerto No 5, with Stephen Kovacevich, Richard Strauss's *Don Juan*, Richard Rodney Bennett's *Sonnet Sequence*, Johann Strauss II's Overture *Die Fledermaus*. Nov 20, 7.30pm.

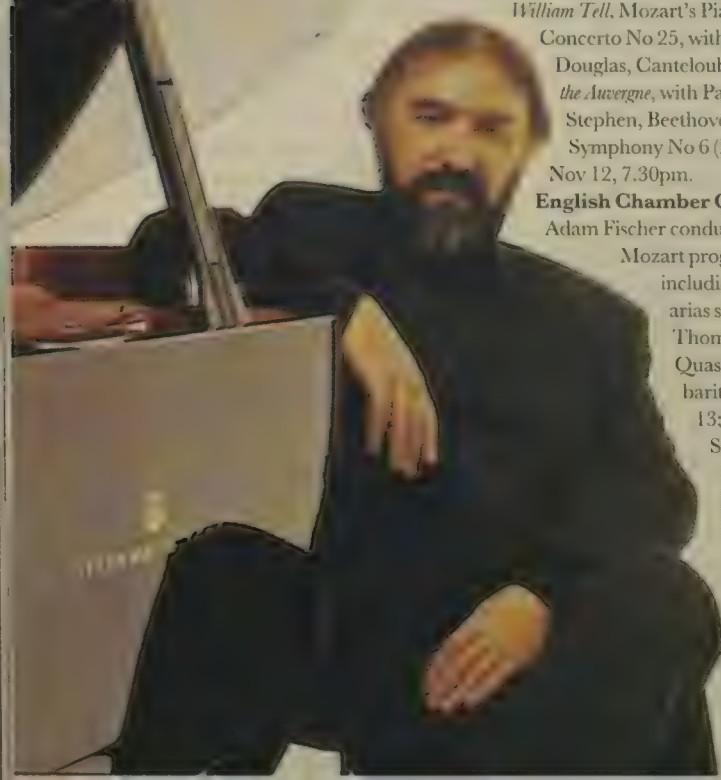
Kiri Te Kanawa, soprano, with the English Chamber Orchestra & London Choral Society, conducted by Julius Rudel. Nov 27, 7.30pm.

José Carreras, tenor, with the BBC Concert Orchestra. Choir of Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford, conducted by David Gimenez, sings favourite songs, arias & carols. Dec 14, 7.30pm.

Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. Owain Arwel Hughes conducts Humperdinck's Overture *Hansel & Gretel*, Leopold Mozart's *Toy*

Radu Lupu: Performs Mozart with the LSO at the Barbican Hall.

DECCA/MARY ROBERT



CECILIA FEST

Honoured by tradition as the patron saint of music, St Cecilia this year lends her name to a six-day festival which reaches a climax on her day, November 22. The event takes place in Stationers' Hall, one of the City of London's fine livery halls. One of Purcell's Odes for St Cecilia's Day was first performed there in 1692, by the Society of Gentlemen, Lovers of Musick and the Professors and Masters of the Art, which annually honoured its patron saint.

St Cecilia was a chaste Roman maiden, martyred for her faith, and initially buried in the city's catacombs, then reinterred in the 16th century in the eponymous church in Trastevere. Her association with music began when she was portrayed by such eminent artists as Raphael, Rubens and Poussin, often seated at an organ. She was also honoured in literature by Chaucer, who included her story in the *Canterbury Tales*, and in music by Purcell, Handel, Haydn and Britten.

This year's St Cecilia Festival of Music opens on November 17 with a concert given by the baroque ensemble Fiori Musicali, which will perform two of Haydn's Masses with the rarely heard Russian Symphony of his Czech contemporary Baron von Wanczura, on historical instruments.

Symphony, Ravel's *L'Enfant et les Sortilèges*. Dec 15, 7.30pm.

BARBICAN HALL

Silk St, EC2 (0171-638 8891).

Buenos Aires Philharmonic Orchestra. García Navarro conducts Brahms' Piano Concerto No 1, with Bruno Leonardo Gelber. Turina's *Danzas Fantásticas*, De Falla's Three Dances from *The Three-Cornered Hat*, Ginastera's Dances from the ballet *Estancia*. Nov 7, 7.30pm.

San Francisco Symphony

Orchestra. Michael Tilson Thomas conducts Copland's Symphonic Ode, Debussy's *La Mer*, Lou Harrison's *Parade*, excerpts from Prokofiev's *Romeo & Juliet*. Nov 10, 7.30pm.

City of London Sinfonia. Richard Hickox conducts Rossini's Overture *William Tell*, Mozart's Piano

Concerto No 25, with Barry Douglas, Canteloube's *Songs of the Auvergne*, with Pamela Helen Stephen, Beethoven's Symphony No 6 (Pastoral). Nov 12, 7.30pm.

English Chamber Orchestra

Adam Fischer conducts an all-Mozart programme, including concert arias sung by Thomas Quasthoff, baritone, Nov 13; Heinrich Schiff conducts Rossini's Overture *The Barber of Seville*.

Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto, with Aaron Rosand, Saint-Saëns' Introduction & rondo capriccioso for violin & orchestra, Beethoven's Symphony No 4, Nov 19; 7.30pm.

Tokyo String Quartet. Mozart, Ravel, Smetana. Nov 21, 7.30pm.

City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra. Simon Rattle conducts Wagner's *Parsifal*: Prelude to Act I & Act III (complete), with Poul Elming as Parsifal, Wolfgang Schöne as Amfortas, Robert Lloyd as Gurnemanz. Nov 22, 7.15pm.



FIORI MUSICALI AT THE STATIONERS' HALL

The baroque and renaissance brass music specialists His Majesty's Sagbutts and Cornets will play ceremonial brass music from 16th- and 17th-century Italy, Germany, Spain and England.

Joshua Rifkin, front-runner in the revival of music by the King of Ragtime, Scott Joplin, contributes some of the master's famous piano rags.

The Skampa Quartet from Prague performs Mozart, Smetana and Beethoven. English works by Elgar, Britten and Vaughan Williams will be played by the Britten Sinfonia. To conclude the festival, the Fiori Musicali with Kerstin Linder-Dewan, violin, perform works by Bach, Vivaldi and Zelenka.

Each concert is preceded by wine and followed by a candlelit dinner in the 18th-century Court Room.

Box office: 01327 361380.



Steven Isserlis: Plays Schumann with the LSO at the Barbican.

London Symphony Orchestra

Colin Davis conducts Mozart's Piano Concerto No 24, with Radu Lupu, Sibelius' *Kullervo* Symphony. Nov 24 & 28, 7.30pm.

Alfred Brendel plays Beethoven's Five Piano Concertos with the Academy of St Martin in the Fields, conducted by Neville Marriner. Nov 25, 27, 29, 7.30pm.

Royal Philharmonic Orchestra.

Matthias Bamert conducts Dvorák's *Carnival Overture*, Brahms' Double Concerto, with Frank Peter Zimmermann, violin, & Heinrich Schiff, cello, Prokofiev's *Romeo & Juliet Suite*, Nov 26; Yuri Temirkanov conducts Ravel's *Mother Goose Suite* & *La Valse*, Bizet's *Jeux d'Enfants*, Fauré's *Dolly Suite*, Dukas' *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*, Dec 3; 7.30pm.

English Baroque Soloists, Monteverdi Choir. John Eliot Gardiner conducts Bach's Mass in B minor, Dec 9, 7.30pm.

London Symphony Orchestra.

Colin Davis conducts James Macmillan's *The World's Ransoming*, Schumann's Cello Concerto, with Steven Isserlis, Beethoven's Symphony No 5, Dec 10 & 11; Verdi's Requiem, Dec 15; 7.30pm.

Katia & Marielle Labèque, pianos. Mozart Sonatas, Debussy's *Nuages & Fêtes*, Ravel's *Rhapsodie Espagnole*, Dec 12, 7.30pm.

FESTIVAL HALL.

South Bank Centre, SE1 (0171-960 4242).

BBC Symphony Orchestra. Jiri Belohlávek conducts Mahler's Symphony No 6, Nov 7, 7.30pm.

Philharmonia Orchestra & Chorus. Leonard Slatkin conducts Elgar's oratorio *The Dream of Gerontius*, Nov 3, 7.30pm.

London Philharmonic Orchestra.

Ulf Schirmer conducts J. Strauss II's *Kaiser Waltzer*, Berg's Violin Concerto, with Cho-Liang Lin, Brahms's Symphony No 4, Nov 11; Schubert/Webern Six German Dances, Brahms' Violin Concerto, with Viktor Tretyakov, Beethoven's Symphony No 3 (*Eroica*), Nov 13; 7.30pm.

Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra. Georg Solti conducts Bartók's

Bernard Haitink: With the London Philharmonic Orchestra at the South Bank.

Tokyo String Quartet: Ravel, Mozart & Smetana at the Barbican Hall.

Divertimento, Liszt's *Mephisto Waltz*, No 1, Tchaikovsky's Symphony No 6 (*Pathétique*). Nov 12, 7.30pm.

London Philharmonic Orchestra, Bach Choir. David Willcocks conducts Poulenc's *Stabat Mater*, Saint-Saëns' Piano Concerto No 2, with John Lill, Duruflé's Requiem, Nov 16, 7.30pm.

Kronos Quartet. The American Independants season ends with Lee Hyla's *Howl USA*, works by Harry Partch, & a staged version of George

Crumb's *Black Angels*. Nov 19, 7.30pm.

Pinchas Zukerman, is solo violin & conductor with the English Chamber Orchestra in Bach's Double Violin Concerto, with Tricia Park, Mozart's Sinfonia Concertante & Symphony No 36 (Linz). Nov 21, 7.30pm.

Vienna Boys Choir. Martin Schebesta directs a new programme of works by Schütz, Michael Haydn, Mendelssohn, Fauré, Brahms, Holst, & Mozart's one act-opera *The Caliph's Goose*. Nov 24, 2.45pm.

Philharmonia Orchestra.

Christoph von Dohnányi conducts Webern/Bach Ricercare, Stravinsky's Violin Concerto, with Viktoria Mullova, a concert performance of Stravinsky's opera *Oedipus Rex*, with Philip Langridge & Willard White. Nov 26, 7.30pm.

Mozart Festival Orchestra. Ian Watson conducts an all-Mozart programme, with the orchestra in 18th-century costumes. Dec 6, 7.30pm.

London Philharmonic Orchestra. Bernard Haitink conducts Bruckner's Te Deum & Symphony No 9, Dec 8; Mozart's Piano Concerto K595, with András Schiff, Shostakovich's Symphony No 4, Dec 11; 7.30pm.

Philharmonia Orchestra. Gennadi Rozhdestvensky conducts Tchaikovsky's *Nutcracker Suite*, Rachmaninov's Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini, with Vladimir

Ovchinnikov. Dec 12, 7.30pm.

Maurizio Pollini plays Beethoven's Piano Sonatas Op 10 Nos 1-3, Op 14 Nos 1,2, Op 13 (*Pathétique*). Dec 13, 7.30pm.

THE PLATE.

17 Duke's Rd, WC1 (0171-387 0031).

Piano Circus. The new music group, which performs on six Steinway grand pianos, gives three concerts comprising works by Nikki Yeoh, John Cage & Brian Eno. Each programme includes Bruce Gilchrist's *Thought Conductor* which incorporates a transformation into music notation of EEG impulses, which the pianists play on sight. Nov 28-30, 8pm.

PURCELL ROOM

South Bank Centre, SE1 (0171-960 4242).

Lunchtime series: Raphael Ensemble, Strauss, Mozart, Nov 7; Melvyn Tan, fortepiano, Schubert, Nov 14; 1.05pm.

Valdine Anderson, soprano, Thomas Ades, piano. Songs by Babbitt, Crumb, Nancarrow, Cage, Ives, Adams. Nov 12, 6.15pm.

Arditti Quartet. Seeger, Reynolds, Cater, Nancarrow, Ives. Nov 12, 8pm.

Brindisi String Quartet. Beethoven, Graham Williams, Brahms. Nov 19, 7.30pm.

Schidlof Quartet. Works by composers with an Austrian-Jewish connection, including Haydn, Horowitz, Schoenberg. Nov 23, 8pm.

Madeleine Mitchell, violin,



HOCKNEY/ALAN CRISTEA GALLERY

UNCORKED!

The fifth annual Cork Street feast of contemporary art sees 16 galleries opening their doors from November 30 to December 1 to show off their respective artists' works. The Alan Cristea Gallery exhibits limited-edition prints by David Hockney; Art First shows new, boldly-carved stone sculptures by Jake Harvey; while fans of Diana Armfield will be delighted to find her lyrical flower paintings at Browse & Darby. The Entwistle Gallery, best known for tribal art, turns to huge fibreglass plant sculptures by Edward Lipski, and presents works by young artists in film, video and other media.

The 100th anniversary of

the births of Tristan Tzara and André Breton is marked at the Mayor Gallery with an exhibition including works by Dalí and Magritte, while Waddington Galleries feature such 20th-century masters as Dubuffet and Picasso, as well as paintings by Patrick Heron and bronzes by Barry Flanagan.

Mercury Gallery shows bright garden landscapes by David Michie, while Stoppenbach & Delestre exhibit a watercolour of the inauguration of the Crystal Palace by 19th-century French artist Eugène Lami. Tryon & Swann Gallery shows marine, sporting, natural history and maritime subjects. For details see Cork Street Art Fair in listings.



Gerhard Oppitz,
piano. Brahms Rhapsodies,
Liszt's *Années de pèlerinage*. Dec 4,
7.45pm.

ST JOHN'S SMITH SQUARE
SW1 (0171-222 1061).

BBC lunchtime concerts. Vermeer Quartet, Wolf, Carter, Nov 11; Boris Pergamenshikov, cello, Lars Vogt, piano, Beethoven, Brahms, Nov 18; Christophe Rousset, harpsichord, Scarlatti, Nov 25; lpm.

Jane Irwin, mezzo-soprano, **Steven Osborne,** piano. Purcell, Mahler, Wolf, Rachmaninov. Nov 13, 7.30pm.

The English Concert. Trevor Pinnock directs Handel, Vivaldi, Albinoni, Bach. Nov 15, 7.30pm.

Orchestra of St John's, Smith Square. John Lubbock conducts Beethoven's Triple Concerto, Brahms' Variations on a theme by Haydn & Double Concerto. Nov 19, 7pm.

Bekova Sisters. Eleonora, piano, Elvira, violin, & Alisia Bekova, cello, play trios by Haydn, Brahms, Tchaikovsky. Dec 2, 7.45pm.

Andrew Ball, piano. Elgar, Prokofiev, Franck. Nov 29, 7.30pm.

QUEEN ELIZABETH HALL.

South Bank Centre, SE1 (0171-960 4242).

Peter Jablonski, piano. Liszt, Prokofiev, Debussy, Copland/Bernstein. Nov 6, 7.45pm.

London Sinfonietta & Voices.

Markus Stenz conducts works by Sofiya Gubaydulina, to mark her 65th birthday, including first London performances. Nov 16, 7.45pm.

Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment. Roger Norrington conducts Mendelssohn, Beethoven's Piano Concerto No 1, with Alexei Lubimov. Nov 18, 7.45pm.

Bekova Sisters. Eleonora, piano, Elvira, violin, & Alisia Bekova, cello, play trios by Haydn, Brahms, Tchaikovsky. Dec 2, 7.45pm.

UNION CHAPEL

Compton Ave, N1 (0171-226 1686).

Dufay Collective. A fresh look at the *Cantigas de Santa Maria*, a 13th-century Iberian illuminated manuscript. Dec 3, 7.30pm.

Concordia. Music for the Mona Lisa, an entertainment from Leonardo's Italy recreated in music & dance. Dec 4, 7.30pm.

WESTMINSTER CATHEDRAL

SW1 (0171-798 9096).

Royal College of Music Chorus & Symphony Orchestra. Steuart Bedford conducts Britten's War Requiem. Dec 4, 8pm.

WIGMORE HALL

36 Wigmore St, W1 (0171-935 2141).

Sunday Morning Coffee

Concerts. Moscow Piano Trio, Beethoven, Tchaikovsky, Nov 10; Vienna Piano Trio, Haydn, Schubert, Nov 17; Mendelssohn Quartet, Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Nov 24; 11.30am.

Alfredo Perl, piano. Continuation of the series in which the Chilean pianist plays all 32 of Beethoven's Piano Sonatas. Nov 5, 20, 7.30pm, Dec 8, 4pm, Dec 28, 7.30pm.

Takacs Quartet. Continuation of their complete Schubert String Quartets series. Nov 6 & 9, 7.30pm.

Wolfgang Holzmair, baritone, **Imogen Cooper,** piano. Songs by Schubert, Fauré, Ravel. Nov 8, 7.30pm.

Mikhail Pletnev, piano. Chopin. Nov 12, 7.30pm.

Brahms Festival. The distinguished Hungarian pianist András Schiff is the artistic director of a Brahms chamber music festival with piano. Nov 16, 19, 21, 23, 26, 7.30pm.

Martino Tirimo, piano. Schubert. Nov 17, 4pm, Dec 4, 7.30pm, Dec 14, 4pm.

Teresa Berganza, mezzo-soprano, **Juan Antonio Alvarez**

Parejo, piano. Haydn, Rodrigo, Falla, Rossini, etc. Nov 18, 7.30pm.

Cécile Ousset, piano. Chopin, Rachmaninov, Fauré, Debussy. Nov 28, 7.30pm.

Barbara Bonney, soprano, **Malcolm Martineau,** piano. Lieder by Mozart & Strauss. Dec 12, 7.30pm.

Chilingirian Quartet 25th Anniversary Concert. Mozart, Tippett, Shostakovich. Dec 13, 7.30pm.

Galina Gorchakova, soprano, **Larissa Gergieva,** piano. Songs by Glazunov, Taneyev, Grechaninov, Rubinstein, Cui. Dec 16, 7.30pm.

CHRISTMAS MUSIC

National Westminster Choir & Westminster Orchestra. Popular works & carols for all. Dec 4, 7.30pm. Barbican.

Gabrieli Consort & Players.

Handel's *Messiah*. Dec 5, 7.30pm.

Barbican.

Hoyboys & Shagbuts of London & I Fagiolini. German Christmas music for early wind & brass. Dec 6, 7.30pm. Union Chapel.

Massed Choirs of London Hospitals.

Carols & other music. Dec 7, 3pm & 7.30pm. Festival Hall.

Islington Choral Society & school choirs. *To Mary a Son*, a new opera/oratorio for viol consort & soloists. Dec 7, 7.30pm. Union Chapel.

* HIGHLIGHT *

Choir & Orchestra of St John's Smith Square.

Christmas by candlelight, including Finnish music, Dec 8, 2.30pm; carols, Dec 9; French music, Dec 10; English music, Dec 11; Italian music, Dec 12; Handel's *Messiah*, Dec 13, 7.30pm. St John's.

London Concert Orchestra.

Seasonal & traditional music & carols for all. Dec 10, 7.30pm, Dec 22, 3.15pm. Festival Hall.

Holst Singers. Christmas music & carols from all over Europe. Dec 14, 7.30pm. St John's.

London Concert Orchestra.

Popular classics & carols for all. Dec 15, 3pm; Dec 23, 7.30pm. Barbican.

Camerata Hispanica. Spanish 16th-century Christmas music. Dec 15, 7.30pm. St John's.

Royal Philharmonic Orchestra.

Favourite works & carols for all. Dec 16, 7.30pm. Barbican.

Philharmonia Chorus & Choir of St Margaret's Church. Carols &

works of celebration. Dec 17, 7.15pm. *Guildhall, EC2.*

Polyphony & the Brandenburg Consort. Bach's Christmas Oratorio Parts 1-3. Dec 17, 7.30pm. *St John's.*

Polyphony. Carols, some from the 15th century, all with 20th-century settings. Dec 18, 7.30pm. *St John's.*

Choir & Orchestra of the Sixteen. Handel's *Messiah*. Dec 20, 7.30pm. *St John's.*

City of London Choir. Carols & Christmas music for choir & audience. Dec 20, 7.45pm. *Queen Elizabeth Hall.*

Choir & Orchestra of Polyphony. Handel's *Messiah*. Dec 21, 7.30pm. *St John's.*

London Concert Orchestra. Popular music & carols for all. Dec 22, 3.15pm. *Festival Hall.*

London Symphony Orchestra. Popular music & carols for all. Dec 21, 8pm; Dec 22, 3.30pm. *Barbican.*

Apollo Chamber Choir & Orchestra. Handel's *Messiah*. Dec 22, 7.30pm. *St John's.*

EXHIBITIONS

Howard Hodgkin, one of Britain's best-known living artists, has a major exhibition of oil paintings at the Hayward Gallery. The V&A brings famous American photographic works from the New York Museum of Modern Art collection, & opens its dazzling new Silver Galleries. In Cork Street 15 dealers join forces to present art of every kind, & the NPG concentrates on the frames surrounding portraits from different periods.



LLEWELLYN ALEXANDER
124-126 *The Cut*, SE1 (0171-620 1322).

A Feast of Food in Art. Specially commissioned paintings associated with food by 20 artists noted for their still lifes, landscapes or cafe scenes.

Nov 28-Jan 4. Mon-Sat 10am-7.30pm.
MARIA ANDIPA & SON ICON GALLERY

162 *Walton St*, SW3 (0171-589 2371).

Images of Christmas. Choose a special present at this sale exhibition of 15th- to 19th-century icons, priced from £50 to £50,000. Dec 2-Jan 11. Mon-Sat 11am-6pm; until 8pm from Dec 16. Closed Dec 25, 26, 30-Jan 1.
BANKSIDE GALLERY

48 *Hopton St*, SE1 (0171-928 7521).

Ken Howard. Recent watercolours by one of Britain's most successful living painters. Nov 7-24. £3.50, concessions £2.

Bankside Winter Collection.

Hundreds of prints & watercolours that may be carried away at prices from £30. Dec 5-Feb 16.

Tues-Fri 10am-5pm (Tues until 8pm until Dec 22); Sun, & Nov 16 & Dec 21, 1-5pm. Closed Dec 23-Jan 6.
BARBICAN ART GALLERY

Barbican Centre, EC2 (0171-382 7105).

Blumenfeld: a fetish for beauty.

Retrospective of German fashion photographer Erwin Blumenfeld (1897-1969), works that transformed his subjects from the mundane to the mysterious. Until Dec 15.

Jam. Music, fashion, photography & advertising, an exhibition examining the cutting edge of urban-style culture in 1990s Britain. Until Dec 15.

Mon 10am-6.45pm; Tues 10am-5.45pm; Wed 10am-8pm; Thurs-Sat 10am-6.45pm; Sun noon-6.45pm.

£4.50 (admits to both) concessions (& everybody Mon-Fri after 5pm) £2.50.

BRITISH LIBRARY

British Museum, Great Russell St, WC1 (0171-412 7111).

Nothing Else but Noise & Dance.

The library's collection of 18th-century theatrical material reflecting the playhouses, playbills, entertainers & audiences of the time. Until Dec 1. Mon-Sat 10am-5pm, Sun 2.30-6pm.
BRITISH MUSEUM

Great Russell St, WC1 (0171-636 1555).

Mysteries of Ancient China. Finds from newly excavated tombs. Until Jan 5. £5, concessions £3 (advance booking on 0171-420 0000). Mon-Sat 10am-5pm, Sun 2.30-6pm. Closed Dec 24-26 & Jan 1.

CORK STREET GALLERY & OTHERS

Cork St, W1 (0171-381 1324).

Cork Street Art Fair. Sixteen leading galleries join forces to present contemporary work, from one-man shows to mixed exhibitions by established names. See box. Nov 30-Dec 1. Sat, Sun 11am-6pm.

ESKENAZI

10 *Clifford St*, W1 (0171-493 5464).

Japanese Inro & Lacquerware

Howard Hodgkin:
Paintings 1975-95,
at the Hayward Gallery.

from a private Swedish

Collection. Fine examples of intro 55 lacquered containers, often intricately decorated with gold & silver & 27 boxes. Nov 12-30. Mon-Fri 9.30am-5.30pm, Sat 10am-1pm.
FESTIVAL HALL FOYERS

South Bank Centre, SE1 (0171-921 0843).

Masks. White clay masks, painted & decorated by 450 celebrities. (All will be auctioned by Sotheby's at the Festival Hall on Nov 28, 7pm; admission by £12 catalogue.) Nov 28-Dec 1. Daily 10am-8pm.
See Christmas Quiz, page 68.

Contemporary Art Society Market.

Paintings, drawings, prints, sculptures, photographs & specially-commissioned works by rising stars of the creative arts, on sale & ready to take away from £100 to £2,000. Nov 26-Dec 1. Daily noon-10.30pm.
HAYWARD GALLERY

South Bank Centre, SE1 (0171-261 0127).

Howard Hodgkin. Colourful, evocative oil paintings executed during the last 20 years by one of the leading British painters of the post-war period. Dec 5-Feb 23.

Art of the Insane. Several hundred works from the collection of German psychiatrist Hans Prinzhorn, who in 1920 published a book on artistry & the mentally ill that inspired Klee, Ernst & other artists. Dec 5-Feb 23. Daily 10am-6pm; Tues, Wed until 8pm. £5 (admits to both shows), concessions £3.50. Closed Dec 24-26 & Jan 1.

IMPERIAL WAR MUSEUM

Lambeth Rd, SE1 (0171-416 5320).

Paul Nash: Aerial Creatures.

More than 60 works by this British war artist, concentrating on his commissions by the Air Ministry during the Second World War. Until Jan 26. Daily 10am-6pm. £4.50, concessions £3.50, children £2.25 (free daily from 4.30pm).

Art of the Insane:
Untitled work by August Klett at the Hayward.



FRAMES OF REFERENCE

Anyone who has ever had to decide how to frame a work of art knows the complicated set of criteria involved—not only the style of the picture itself, but personal taste, room decor and even one's own lifestyle. The Art of the Picture Frame, opening at the National Portrait Gallery on November 8, and Frameworks, running concurrently at the Paul Mitchell Gallery in Bond Street, examine the relationship of frame to picture in a wide range of works.

At its simplest, the frame of a painting serves to protect the edges of the work from damage. However, it also enhances the picture and, as the NPG illustrates through different portraits from its collection, experts may even be able to date a picture from its frame—the plain,

dark ones of Tudor times, the carved frames of the 17th century, the Palladian, rococo and neo-classical designs, Pre-Raphaelite frames or the simple mouldings of our own times. The effect of different frames on the same image is examined, too, using a series made over the last 200 years for the gallery's portrait of William Shakespeare.

Visitors are shown techniques of frame-making, oil and water gilding, and conservation and restoration of several historic frames including one made in the 1530s for a portrait of King Henry VIII. The exhibition's curator, Jacob Simon, gives illustrated lectures at 1.10pm on November 14 and December 5 and 12; Paul Mitchell, whose gallery will be setting the subject in its international context, gives the talk on November 21.

For details of National Portrait Gallery and Paul Mitchell exhibitions, see listings.



Closed Dec 24-26.

LEIGHTON HOUSE
12 Holland Park Rd, W14 (0171-602 3316).

Silver to Dine For! Selling exhibition of modern tableware by designer-silversmiths. See box page 81. Dec 2-14, Mon-Sat 11am-5.30pm.
PAUL MITCHELL GALLERY
99 New Bond St, W1 (0171-493 8732).

Frameworks, Classic European frame styles
Renaissance, Baroque,

Rococo, neo-Classical & 19th-century—& contemporary portraits for which each was designed. See box above.

Nov 8-Feb 8. Mon-Fri 10am-5.30pm, Sat 10am-1pm. Closed Dec 24-Jan 1.

MUSEUM OF LONDON

London Wall, EC2 (0171-600 3699).

Whitefriars Glass: the art of

James Powell & Sons. Some of the most outstanding examples by this Manchester factory, the output of which ranged from Arts & Crafts designs through 1920s Modernism to

sleek Scandinavian-inspired styles. Until Jan 26. Tues-Sat 10am-5.50pm, Sun noon-5.50pm. £3.50, concessions £1.75 (free daily from 4.30pm). Closed Dec 24-26 & Jan 1.

MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE

South Bank, SE1 (0171-401 2636).

Re-Play. Hands-on show of video games, from those of the 1960s,

through Space Invaders, to the very latest trends, plus a look at the physiological effects on the human body of playing computer games.

Nov 29-May 15. Daily 10am-6pm. £5.95, students £4.85, OAPs & children £4. Closed Dec 24-26.

NATIONAL GALLERY
Trafalgar Sq, WC2 (0171-839 3321).

Sainsbury Wing:

Making & Meaning: Rubens' Landscapes. How & why the Dutch master painted landscapes, illustrated by five of his own works & others by his contemporaries. Until Jan 19. Sunley Room:

Now we are 64: Peter Blake.

Paintings, inspired by works in the gallery, made by this British pop artist during a two-year period as its Associate Artist. Until Jan 5. Mon-Sat 10am-6pm, Wed until 8pm, Sun noon-6pm. Closed Dec 24-26 & Jan 1.

NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY
St Martin's Pl, WC2 (0171-306 0055).

Private Eye Times, 1961-96.

Cartoons, caricatures, covers, books & pamphlets illustrate 35 years in the history of Britain's best-known satirical magazine. Until Jan 5.

The Art of the Picture Frame: artists, patrons & the framing of portraits. Major exhibition on the theme, style, function & technique of frames in Britain. See box above. Nov 8-Feb 9. £3, concessions £2. Mon-Fri 10am-5.55pm, Sun noon-5.55pm. Closed Dec 24-26 & Jan 1.

THE QUEEN'S GALLERY
Buckingham Palace Rd, SW1 (0171-839 1377).

Leonardo. Some 100 fine drawings from the Royal Collection. Until Feb 16. Daily 9.30am-4.30pm. £3.50, OAPs £2.50, children £2. Closed Dec 25 & 26.

LORENZO, THE FLYING FRENCHMAN

This year's 25th anniversary edition of the Olympia International Show Jumping Championships, from December 18 to 22, is as popular as ever—half of the tickets went before the end of the summer.

German Olympic gold medallists Franke Sloothaak & Ludger Beerbaum are expected to compete, alongside such British heroes as Nick Skelton, John & Michael Whitaker & Tim Stockdale.

Entertainment during the twice-daily sessions includes racing Shetland ponies, jumping dogs, demonstrations by the King's

Troop & the Household Cavalry, & a daredevil display by Lorenzo, a French equestrian acrobat. Top riders enter the Christmas Cracker Accumulator (each fence is more difficult than the last) & the Mistletoe Take Your Own Line

(where competitors plot their own course to the fastest time), and let their hair down for the Christmas Fancy Dress Relay. But it's not just fun and games—last year's Mince Pie Puissance, saw Guy Goosen on Sagrat set a new Olympia record height of 7ft 4in.

Olympia International Show Jumping Championships. Dec 18-22, 1.30pm & 7pm.
Olympia, Hammersmith Rd, W14 (box office 0171-373 3113).



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ROYAL ACADEMY OF ARTS

Piccadilly, W1 (0171-439 7438).

Alberto Giacometti, 1901-66.

Major exhibition surveying the career of the Swiss artist, including paintings as well as the elongated sculptures for which he is best known. Until Jan 1. Daily 10am-6pm. £5.50, concessions £4.50 (advance booking on 0171-494 5676).

Living Bridges. Plans for a possible new Thames crossing as well as images of inhabited bridges of the past in Paris & Venice, London & Bath. Until Dec 18. £5, concessions £4, children £1.

From Mantegna to Picasso. 100 master drawings from the collection of Eugene & Clare Thaw, featuring many 18th- & 19th-century works by Cézanne, Delacroix, Degas & Redon. Nov 9-Jan 19. £5, concessions £3.50. Daily 10am-6pm. Closed Dec 24-26. SPINK

5-7 King St, SW1 (0171-930 7888).

Edward Seago. Landscapes of Portugal, Italy, Paris, London & East Anglia in oil & watercolour. Nov 6-29. Mon-Fri 9am-5.30pm, Tues until 7.30pm.

TATE GALLERY
Millbank, SW1 (0171-887 8008).

Grand Tour: the lure of Italy in the 18th century. Maps, snuffboxes, fans & works by Reynolds, Canaletto, Fragonard & other artists recall the days when no young man's education was complete if he had not visited Italy. Until Jan 5. £6, concessions £4.

Works from the Ted Power Collection. Modern American & European art collected by a former trustee of the gallery. Includes paintings by Dubuffet, Picabia,

Hodgkin & Caulfield & a sculpture by Brancusi. Nov 19-Feb 16.

Mon-Sat 10am-5.30pm, Sun 2-5.30pm. Closed Dec 24-26 & Jan 1.

THEATRE MUSEUM

Russell St, WC2 (0171-836 7891).

Dressing the Part. The work of professional costumiers from ballet to West End musicals & films. Workshops on beading, jewellery- & mask-making & armoury maintenance. Nov 25-May 25. Tues-Sun 11am-7pm. £3.50, concessions £2. Closed Dec 23-26 & Jan 1.

VICTORIA & ALBERT MUSEUM

Cromwell Rd, SW7 (0171-938 8349).

American Photography 1890-1965. Landmark images by Steiglitz, Evans, Strand, Penn, Arbus & other significant figures. Nov 14-Jan 26.

* HIGHLIGHT *

Silver Galleries. A spectacular new home for the National Collection of English Silver, containing pieces dating from 1300 to 1800. See box page 81. Opens Nov 27.

Mon noon-5.50pm, Tues-Sun 10am-5.50pm. £5, concessions £3; students, children, & everybody from 4.30-5.50pm free. Closed Dec 24-26.

WHITECHAPEL ART GALLERY

Whitechapel High St, E1 (0171-522 7878).

Inside the Visible. Hidden themes in 20th-century art—work by 37 women artists, from Claude Cahun's surrealist self-portraits to an installation made from her own hair by Mona Hatoum. Until Dec 8. Tues-Sun 11am-5pm, Wed until 8pm. £3.50, concessions £2.

Sotheby's racing sale:
Silks worn by Lester Piggott for his first Derby win, in 1954, on Never Say Die.



RALLYING ROUND

Drivers will be revving up for the start of the gruelling Network Q RAC Rally on November 23. This year sees a new-style world championship event, giving a first sight of the turbocharged four-wheel-drive World Rally Cars due to come into full operation in 1997. Scotsman Colin McRae, winner for the last two years, has written off several Subarus in an unfortunate season to date, leaving the field wide open to four-times world champion Juha Kankkunen from Finland—though coming up fast through the flying mud and stones is likely to be Richard Burns from Reading.

The first day takes drivers from Chester, near the Welsh border, to the awesome Kielder Forest on the fringes of Scotland. Sunday, when the drivers work their way down from Leeds via Chatsworth, Clumber Park, Trentham and Tatton Park, provides the best viewing for spectators, who can be invaluable to teams as they are often the only people on hand in remote spots to heave cars back on to the track and into the rally. Three days—and more than 1,000 miles—later, they reach the finish back in Chester. And spare a thought for the co-drivers. Eyes glued to the map, each shouts a constant stream of instructions to guide the driver through every twist and turn—a real test of the stomach as well as of the navigational skills.

Network Q RAC Rally. Nov 23-25. Starts and finishes Chester, Cheshire. Information 0891 551 155.

SPORT

Having turned professional, the rugby union world is still in turmoil while the true impact of serious money is digested. While the dust settles about England's controversial decision to sell television rights to Sky, the rugger season kicks off with a visit by the Australia XV, followed by those of New Zealand & South Africa. The RAC Rally is guaranteed to plaster spectators with mud at every turn, as they wait to see if the trophy will be wrenched from current world champion Colin McRae. At somewhat lower horsepower, excitement is nevertheless guaranteed at Olympia, for the show jumping, & at Kempton Park for the King George VI Chase.

DARTS

Winmau World Championships. Dec 6, 7. Earl's Court International Hotel, Lillie Rd, SW6 (0181-883 5544).

EQUESTRIANISM

Olympia International Show

Jumping. Top riders compete in dozens of events, from the Christmas Carol Stakes to the Mince Pie Puissance. See box page 82. Dec 18-22. Olympia, Hammersmith Rd, W14 (0171-373 3113).

HORSE RACING

Murphy's Gold Cup. Nov 16. Cheltenham, Glos (01242 513014).

Hennessy Cognac Gold Cup. Nov 30. Newbury, Berks (01635 40015).

King George VI Chase. Dec 26. Kempton Park, Sunbury-on-Thames, Surrey (01932 782292).

Other Boxing Day meetings at:

Ayr, Hereford, Huntingdon, Ludlow, Market Rasen, Newton Abbot, Sedgefield, Wetherby, Wincanton & Wolverhampton (0171-486 4715).

Coral Welsh National. Dec 27. Chepstow, Gwent (01291 622260).

ICE SKATING

1996 tesa British Ice Figure & Dance Championships. Will Steven Cousins glide away with the men's title for the eighth consecutive year? And can Betty Calloway's new protégés, Marika Humphreys &

Philip Askew, challenge the memories of Torvill & Dean? Nov 12-16. *Spectrum, Guildford, Surrey* (01483 444777).

MOTOR SPORT

• HIGHLIGHT •

RAC/Network Q Rally. From mid-Wales to wildest Northumberland, some of the world's greatest drivers hurtle through forests & along 1,130 miles of roads & rutted tracks. See box page 83. Nov 23-25. Starts & finishes Chester, Cheshire (0891 551 155).

RUGBY

Scotland v Australia. Nov 9. Murrayfield, Edinburgh (0131-346 5000).

London Grand Christmas Parade: Music & fun for all in the West End.



England v New Zealand

Barbarians. This match promises a feast of running rugby. Nov 30. Twickenham, Middx (0181-744 3111). **Ireland v Australia.** Nov 30. Lansdowne Road, Dublin (00 353 1 6684601).

Barbarians v Australia. Dec 7. Twickenham.

England v Argentina. Dec 14. Twickenham.

Wales v South Africa. Wales face the current world champions. Dec 15. Cardiff Arms Park, Cardiff (01222 390111).

SWIMMING

Uncle Ben's British Winter Championships. Dec 19-22. Ponds Forge International Sports Centre, Sheffield, S Yorks (0114-276 2350).

TENNIS

Guardian Direct National Championships. Greg Rusedski & Tim Henman will be among top British players battling on the indoor courts. Nov 12-17. Telford International Centre, Telford, Salop (01952 291919).

European Women's Team

Championships. Players include Britain's Clare Wood, Sam Smith & Valda Lake. Nov 22-24. Redbridge Sports Centre, Redbridge, Essex (0181-501 0019).



PERFECT POINSETTIAS

Poinsettias are not the most easy-going of indoor plants. They get nostalgic for their native Mexico and require growing temperatures of 70°F. It is ironic, therefore, that in Britain their exotic crimson leaves go hand in hand with Christmas.

Indeed, so great is the current demand that at John Evans' nursery and garden centre, at Ruxley in Kent, some 7 acres of glasshouses are dedicated to growing poinsettias, or *Euphorbia pulcherrima*.

The propagation and sale of poinsettias makes up 75 per cent of the Christmas trade at Ruxley Manor. Although the family nursery started in 1876, it was not until about 1960 that poinsettias made an appearance, introduced to Britain (along with garden centres, as it happens) from the United States.

"Poinsettias are firmly established as the Christmas plant," says John. And for a top nurseryman that means a lot of hard graft. John supplies poinsettias by the thousand to some of the country's best-known stores, and they all expect their plants to be in peak condition.

John explains that the bracts are the key. For the botanically ignorant, they are the red bits, the poinsettia's crowning glory. They can also be pink, but purists would surely

favour that classic display of crimson against green which makes the poinsettia such a Christmas showstopper. Achieving the effect is where the expertise of a seasoned nurseryman comes in.

"We plant the cuttings in week 32 [the end of August] when the days are getting shorter," says John. "Day length is crucial to the plant. Too much light and they'll grow too tall. They need long hours of darkness and warm temperatures to bring them on and allow the bracts to enlarge."

A tip from John: if you put a black plastic bag over your poinsettia for at least 14 hours a day from the end of September, the plant should oblige with a second batch of red bracts.

No bin bags for John. He has special blacked-out green-houses to keep his plants on the straight and narrow because, unchecked, they will gallop to the height of a small tree in a few short seasons. "No good to the customer who wants a Christmas table decoration," says John dryly.

Nor is it any good to have a plant that needs constant high temperatures. "Any element of mollycoddling puts people off buying," he says. "The plants have to be hardened off, so greenhouse temperatures are brought right down before the plants go off to the retailer."

JANE SANDERSON

TUDOR REVELS

To mark the festive season the whole of Hampton Court Palace is filled with the sights, sounds and smells of an earlier age: Traditional stilt walkers and jesters in the courtyards; Christmas carols and dance in the Great Hall and 16th-century cookery demonstrations and feasting in the Tudor kitchens.

When Henry VIII was in residence more than 200 staff worked in his huge kitchens preparing meals for a household of between 600 and 1,000 people. Visit the kitchens over Christmas this year and you will see a much reduced team of just 12 men in full Tudor costume preparing an authentic Tudor feast. Henry VIII's kitchens were also a male domain with a lone female employed to make the royal pudding!

The cooks' costumes are completely authentic from the brae (underpants) outward. They may look impractical but food historian and Master Cook at the Palace, Peter Brears, insists that the layers of linen and wool protect from the heat of the fire and insulate against cold winter mornings. He does admit that a lack of zips means that loo breaks take much longer!

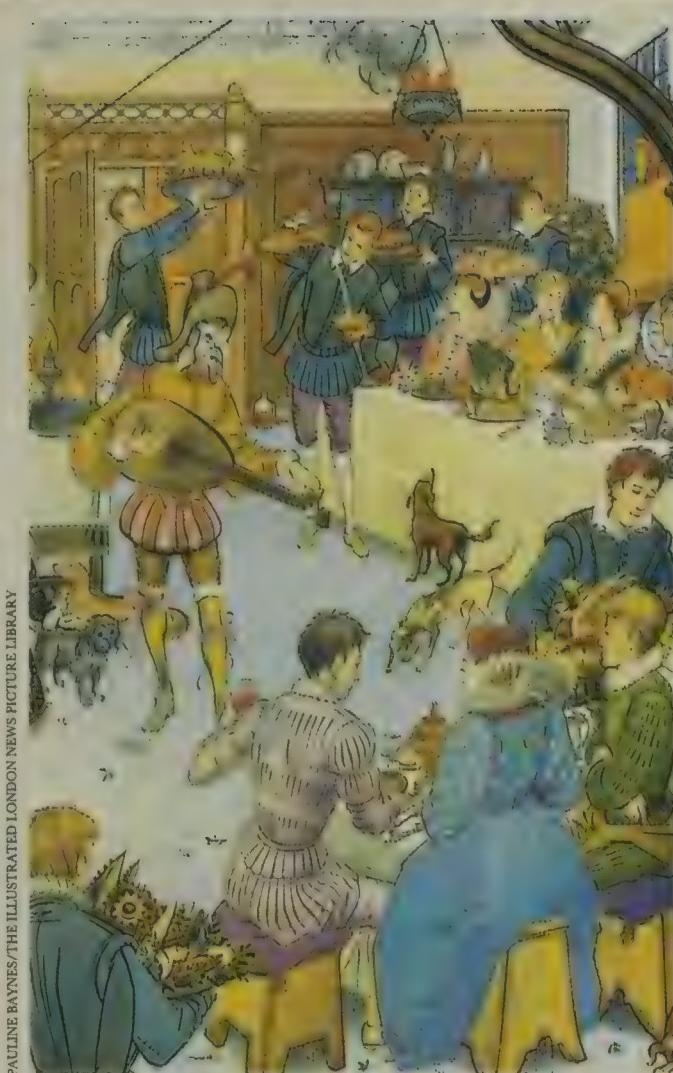
The day of the grand cookery demonstration begins early in the morning with the lighting of huge fires and charcoal burners; the action continues until the cooks sit down to eat at 3pm. Roast hams, chicken, beef and legs of lamb turn gently on their spits sending mouth-watering smells

around the palace, while accompanying dishes of lemon salad and vegetables are skilfully prepared using authentic utensils and cooking techniques. There are demonstrations of sugar sculptures and giant march panes—an early form of marzipan. Look out for a solid sugar St Paul's Cathedral and a 2ft-wide march pane made from over 5lb of sugar.

Cooks take breaks to join visitors in board games such as merels (an early form of backgammon), chess or Tudor skittles. During the 15th and 16th centuries these pastimes were considered a threat to the protection of the realm and banned to encourage the more practical sport of archery. The 16th-century Christmas was especially popular as one of the few times when games could be freely enjoyed.

A Tudor Christmas at Hampton Court Palace is, however, much more than just food. Its apartment courtyards and corridors come to life in spectacular fashion. A stilt-walking fool, teetering high above the heads of his audience, regales them with Tudor anecdotes and stories. Visitors can also follow the leader in an energetic early form of the conga, called the farandole, that winds its way around the palace.

The Great Hall is the place to discover Tudor masques, the huge theatrical productions of Henry VIII's time which featured spectacular scenery and costumes. So raise yourself from



PATRICK BAYNES/THE ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS PICTURE LIBRARY

your sofa and come on over to join in the festive fun.

Tudor festivities at Hampton Court Palace take place every day from Friday, December 27, to Wednesday, January 1, inclusive. All activities are free with admission to the palace. The palace is open Tuesday-

Sunday from 9.30am to 4.30pm and on Mondays from 10.15am to 4.30pm. Admission to the palace is £8 for adults, £5.75 for senior citizens and students and £4.90 for children under 16 years. Children under five are admitted free.

GILL HARRISON

OTHER EVENTS

A plethora of parades bring colour & spectacle to the London streets this season, starting with the centuries-old Lord Mayor's Show, & moving on to the somewhat newer pre-Christmas & New Year's Day parades. Swimmers take the traditional plunge in the Serpentine on Christmas morning; while energetic walkers can shake down the pudding on guided rambles with the National Trust.

Christmas Lights: Seasonal shopping sprees start in earnest once the colourful Christmas lights are switched on: Oxford St, Nov 7; Regent St, Nov 12. Daily until

Jan 6, dusk-midnight. Oxford St & Regent St, W1.

Country Living Christmas Fair. Presents, decorations, clothes, crafts—many from small businesses—food & drink with a seasonal theme, & a "treats" corner offering beauty products, massage & other stress-relieving devices, plus a gift-wrapping & dispatch service for presents bought at the fair. Nov 8-11, 10am-6pm. Business Design Centre, 52 Upper St, N1 (ticket hotline 0171-288 6888).

Lord Mayor's Show. Great spectacle, with bands, floats & military parade accompanying the new Lord Mayor; fireworks display on river Thames at 5pm. Nov 9. Starts 11am from Guildhall, EC2, via Gresham St, Poultry, Cheapside, St Paul's Churchyard, Fleet St; returns, leaving 1.50pm from Law Courts, EC4, via

Victoria Embankment to Mansion House.

Remembrance Day Service & Parade. Detachments of Armed Forces & ex-servicemen & women, joined by the Queen & political leaders, pay tribute to those who died in the two world wars & other conflicts. Two minutes' silence at 11am, followed by the Last Post, a short service, Reveille & the National Anthem. Nov 10. 10.30am. Cenotaph, Whitehall, SW1.

Cancer Relief Macmillan Fund Christmas Market. Crafts, art, cashmere sweaters, impressive crackers made by committee members, Christmas cards, jewellery, & all sorts of gift ideas on sale, aiming to raise £120,000 for the charity. Nov 12, 10am-4.30pm. RHS New Hall, Greycourt St, SW1.

Racing Sale. The silks worn by

Lester Piggott for his first Derby win, on Never Say Die in 1954, are among the highlights of this unusual auction. Other items include paintings & sculptures, cups & trophies. Nov 13, 2.30pm. Sotheby's, 34-35 New Bond St, W1 (0171-493 8080).

Fine Art & Antiques Fair. More than 230 leading antique dealers from throughout Europe offer exquisite furniture & works of art. Nov 13-19. Wed 6-10pm, Thurs 11am-9pm, Fri & Mon 11am-8pm, Sat & Sun 11am-7pm, Tues 11am-5pm. Olympia, Hammersmith Rd, W14.

London Grand Christmas Parade. Father Christmas arrives in the capital, accompanied by 2,000 dancers, musicians, celebrities, acrobats, jugglers & clowns. Nov 24. Starts 11am, Marble Arch, W1, then proceeds via Oxford St, Regent St,



Piccadilly to Berkeley St, W1.

RHS Christmas Flower Show.

Trees, shrubs & flowers that will provide colour & interest in the winter garden. Nov 26, 27. Tues 11am-7pm, Wed 10am-5pm. RHS Halls, Vincent Sq & Greycoat St, SW1.

National Honey Show. Buzzing with information on honey & beekeeping; sale of candles & crafts. Nov 28-30. Thurs 2-7pm, Fri 9.30am-7pm, Sat 9.30am-5pm. Kensington Town Hall, Hornton St, W8.

St Andrew's Ball. Experienced

Pedigree pets on parade: These handsome Siamese are typical of the cats on show at Olympia.



SIAMESE CATS BY ASTRID BUDDICK/LLEWELLYN ALEXANDER GALLERY

CHOCS AWAY!

Where would Christmas be without chocolate? Always an indulgence, always a successful gift—over half of boxed chocolates are sold during the festive season. According to the ancient Mayans who first discovered it, chocolate was a gift from the gods and perusing our pick of the most luxurious one can easily believe it.

You need not even stir from your armchair to do your chocolate Christmas-shopping—simply pick up the telephone and order, and a sumptuously gift-wrapped selection of the world's finest chocolates will be sent by post to delight your nearest and dearest chocoholic. Prices are for a 1lb box, unless otherwise stated.

Charbonnel et Walker have the ultimate gift—for £195, a monthly selection of seasonal gift-wrapped chocolates will be sent throughout the year. The selection includes such hedonistic delights as a Christmas Presentation Box of handmade Truffles; Champagne Truffle Hearts in a heart-shaped box for St Valentines Day in February; a splendid chocolate egg at Easter;

Strawberry White Truffles created specially for Wimbledon in June. Also for Christmas are Bittermint-filled Crackers, below right, £12.70 each. *Charbonnel et Walker, One, The Royal Arcade, 28 Old Bond Street London W1X 4BT, for mail order tel: 0171-491 0939.*

Rococo Chocolates, the shop was opened in 1983 by self-confessed passionate chocolate-lover Chantal Coady, their best-selling Christmas range is a 1lb box of gift-wrapped, fresh-cream truffles, £14.60, or try a 1lb selection of Traditional English Hand-dipped Chocolates, £10.80, such as violet or lavender creams. *Rococo Chocolates, 321 King's Road, Chelsea, London SW3, for mail order tel: 0171-352 5857, by December 9 latest to arrive for Christmas.*

Godiva, this Belgian chocolatier, who gave the world the first ever deluxe chocolate truffle, has a Christmas collection of luxurious chocolates, see left, in red, green and gold plaid ballotins decorated with red velvet ribbons, or packed in beautiful moire-silk boxes, or for that extra touch ask for the most sumptuous gift wrap—gold-trimmed

Scottish country dancers are welcome to reel along to Ben Saunders band, in celebration of Scotland's patron saint. Nov 29. Hammersmith Town Hall, King St, W6 (booking on 01962 771352).

Christmas Craft Show/The

Festive Table. Some 350 craftsmen demonstrate & sell their creations, & give workshops & seminars. The second show offers high-quality food & drink with a seasonal flavour. Nov 29-Dec 1, 10.30am-5.30pm. Alexandra Palace, N22.

Christmas Murder Mystery

Dinner Theatre. A murderous evening, with killings, detective work, comic plots, dinner, entertainment & dancing. Nov 29, 30, Dec 2-5, 7, 9, 10-12, 16-20, 6.45pm. *Mermaid Theatre, Puddledock, EC4 (0171-226 0675).*

Christmas Crackers. Workshop for children, in which they can design & make their own crackers in time for the big day. Dec 1, 2-4pm. *Ragged School Museum, 46-50 Copperfield Rd, E3.*

Christmas at the Geffrye. The room-settings (from 1600 to 1950) are decked out in period style, while the front garden of these former almshouses is adorned with a 40-foot tree. Dec 3-Jan 5. Tues-Sat 10am-5pm, Sun 2-5pm; closed Dec 23-26 & Jan 1. Christmas events include a herbal workshop on Dec 7 where participants can make decorations & gifts (ring for details). To mark Twelfth Night (Jan 6), the holly & ivy decorations are burnt at 4pm, after which visitors can tuck into Twelfth Night cake & mulled wine. *Geffrye Museum, Kingsland Rd, E2 (0171-739 9893).*

Christmas Tree in Trafalgar Square.

The white lights are switched on, illuminating the giant Norway spruce—an eagerly-awaited annual gift to the citizens of London from the people of Oslo, in gratitude for Britain's help during World War II. Dec 5, dusk. Carols are sung around the tree daily until Dec 24, 3-10pm; illumination continues daily until Jan 6. *Trafalgar Sq, WC2.*

Cancer Research Christmas pudding race. Competitors in fancy dress negotiate novelty obstacles while carrying plum puddings. Dec 7; entertainment starts 10.30am, races

THE SCOTTS REPORT

Scotts, one of London's oldest and most glamorous restaurants, is being refurbished ready to open in a blaze of festivity in time for the Christmas season. The revamped Oyster Terrace and Bar have been in full swing since "R's returned to the months at the beginning of September. Now all eyes are on the restaurant, which reopens in November with a series of high-profile charity events and will then settle down to serious Christmas dining.

Scotts has always been the quintessential "English" restaurant, famous for native fish and seafood brought fresh from nearby waters. Over the years it has offered increasingly inventive fare, with traditional dishes given a modern twist, but its old favourites steadfastly remain combinations of its famous oysters, lobster and caviar, all accompanied by champagne. This Christmas the

ribbons with gold roses, Godiva chocolates start at £18 per lb.
Godiva, 247 Regent Street, London W1.
For stockists and mail order tel: 0171-495 2845.

Green & Black's markets quality organic chocolate, and buys its cocoa beans under the Fairtrade Mark from Maya farmers in Belize. Choose from



bars of Organic Dark Chocolate; Organic Milk Chocolate; Organic Mint Chocolate—a wonderful after-dinner treat; or the evocatively named Maya Gold—organic dark chocolate flavoured with rainforest spices and oranges, £1.35-£1.85. For Christmas there is also a special foil-wrapped Santa, £1.19. *Green & Black's* available from Sainsbury's and from health food shops. For details of nearest stockists, tel: 0171-243 0562.

Harrods Chocolate Hall. Abandon hope all chocolate lovers who enter here! Rows and rows of delicious perfect hand-made chocolates, and dazzling gift-wrappings!

As well as gift-wrapped selections of their own chocolates, such as traditional English chocolates, like rose and violet creams, £14.50, Harrods also sell Belgian chocolates by eminent names such as Léonidas, famous for their two white fresh-cream chocolates: Manon Blanc and Manon Café, £8.17. Harrods, 87-135 Brompton Road, London SW1, for mail order tel: 0171-730 1234.

The Chocolate Club, was established in 1994 for those chocolate lovers who prefer their chocolates to come to them. The Club delivers the best from chocolatiers all over Europe by post to its 10,000 members, wherever they may live. Membership is free with any purchase over £9.99 and includes a sumptuously presented catalogue of their exquisite range and the opportunity to gain access to superior and specialist chocolates. For details of how to join the The Chocolate Club tel: 0171-267 5375.

S'il vous plaît, simply leave your message and credit card number, and a very special present of a beautifully gift-wrapped box or designer ballotin of the finest Belgian fresh cream and praline chocolates, £16.50 for 27 chocolates, will be delivered next day; or go mad and send a gift presentation of Luxury Brut Champagne nestling in a basket with 50 of the finest chocolates, £61.35 (including P&P). *S'il vous plaît*, 24-hour Chocolates by Post Hotline tel: 01844 201690.

The Chocolate Society was formed in 1990 to promote quality chocolate.

Treat a chocoholic friend to a year's membership for £45, which includes a box of the Beluga caviar of chocolates—Valrhona 123 Collection of dark chocolate squares—invitations to tastings and demonstrations; and expert advice on cooking with chocolate. To join The Chocolate Club and for mail order tel: 01423 322230, 36 Elizabeth Street, London SW1.

And finally what better book to curl up with while indulging in a chocolate feast than *The Book of Chocolate*, published by Flammarion, £35 (ref no 2080135880, to order see page 90), a lavishly illustrated volume that traces the history of chocolate and also features a Connoisseur's Guide to the finest purveyors of chocolate throughout the world, plus 11 sinfully good recipes.

ROSEMARY DUFFY

restaurant is ensuring that it has plentiful supplies of Beluga and Krug. However, those suffering from seasonal over-indulgence may opt for the newly-introduced special light menu.

Throughout its history Scotts has played host to a firmament of stars—names such as Marlene Dietrich, Charlie Chaplin, Marilyn Monroe and the Duke and Duchess of Windsor. The restaurant was founded in 1851, the year when Crystal Palace opened in nearby Hyde Park. Perhaps with a nod to its contemporary, Scotts' new

decor centres on a glass staircase which spirals around a clear column filled with sparkling water. In addition, the Oyster Bar now extends along the entire front of the building and includes a pavement terrace for al fresco eating and two new private dining rooms.

Scotts Restaurant, Oyster Terrace & Bar, 20, Mount Street, London W1Y 6HE. Tel: 0171-629 5248.

A souvenir booklet detailing Scotts' history will be published to coincide with the reopening of the restaurant.



11.45am. *The Piazza*, Covent Garden, WC2.

National Cat Club Show. The top event in the feline world, drawing hundreds of pedigrees & family pets, plus their owners, & attracting thousands of admirers. Dec 14, 10am-5.30pm. Olympia, W14.

St George & the Dragon. At this red-brick Tudor house in Hackney, a group of mummers performs a 17th-century tale—complete with bears, fire-eaters & of course, a dragon—with authentic dialogue, costume & props. Dec 15, at half-hourly intervals between 11.30am & 5pm. Sutton House, 2 & 4 Homerton High St, E9.

Seasonal Circus. Chinese State Circus, Dec 22-Jan 27, Roundhouse, Chalk Farm Rd, NW1 (0171-482 7318). Cirque du Soleil presents *Saltimbanco*, Jan 2-19, Albert Hall, Kensington Gore, SW7 (0171-589 8212).

Peter Pan Cup. Traditional Christmas Day swimming event, first held in 1864, at which some 30 hardy contestants splash out over a distance of 100 yards. Dec 25, 9am. Serpentine, Hyde Park, W2.

Post-Christmas Walks. Guided perambulations led by a qualified guide around interesting areas of London: Dec 26, meet 11am, for a 2-mile walk around Southwark, starting & finishing at the George Inn, 77 Borough High St, SE1; Dec 30, meet 11am at 17th-century Fenton House

for a 2- to 3-mile ramble around Hampstead, finishing at the Goldfinger house in Willow Rd, NW3 (booking essential for Hampstead walk: send sae to National Trust Box Office, PO Box 180, High Wycombe, Bucks HP14 4XT).

★ HIGHLIGHT ★

Tudor Festivities. The palace of King Henry VIII comes to life, with meat roasting over a blazing fire in the magnificent Tudor kitchens & demonstrations of delicate sugar work, plus entertainment provided by jesters & musicians. Dec 27-Jan 3, Mon 10.15am-4.30pm, Tues-Sun 9.30am-4.30pm; closed Dec 24-26. Hampton Court Palace, East Molesey, Surrey (0181-781 9500). See box, page 85.

London Parade. Some 10,000 participants will walk the 2-mile route through the West End to welcome in the New Year. Bands & cheerleaders, rollerbladers & baton-twirlers, plus vast inflatable cartoon characters lend a jolly American flavour to the show. Jan 1, noon. Starts Parliament Sq, SW1, finishes Berkeley Sq, W1.

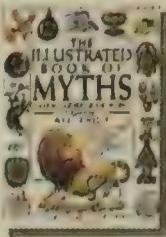
CHRISTMAS BOOKS

CHILDREN'S

THE ILLUSTRATED BOOK OF MYTHS

Neil Philip and Nilesh Mistry

The how and the why of life summed up in stories as old as time, some familiar (King Arthur, Atlantis) others less so (Quetzalcoatl, Aztec god of creation, P'an-ku, the first being of Chinese mythology, whose eyes became the sun and the moon), perfect for an inquiring young mind. For ages 10 to 14. Dorling Kindersley, £14.99 (ref no 0751 351 375•).



INCREDIBLE EXPLOSIONS

Stephen Biest

The human body, the Grand Canyon, Venice and a space station—just a few of the subjects dissected in this behind-the-scenes view of how the world works. Written with great wit and packed with astonishing facts—guaranteed to enthrall the whole family. For age 8 and upwards. Dorling Kindersley, £14 (ref no 0751 354 422•).



THE WORMHOLERS

Jamila Gavin

When Natalie, Chad and Sophie fall through a crack in the floor they join the Wormholes in their alternative universe and embark on an adventure beyond their wildest dreams. Conventional concepts of time and space are questioned in this dazzling book. For ages 12 to 15. Mammoth, £3.99 (ref no 0749 725 834•).



THE CRAZY SHOE SHUFFLE

Gillian Cross

In the 20th century, witches don't necessarily ride on a broomstick, as 11-year-old Lee finds out in this hilarious tale of a school turned upside down when a good turn is rewarded. For ages 8 to 12. Mammoth, £3.50 (ref no 0749 722 002•).



WIZARD OF OSLO

Jostein Gaarder, best-selling author of "Sophie's World", introduces his latest book "The Christmas Mystery".

Jostein Gaarder, 20th-century philosopher extraordinaire and author of *Sophie's World*, demonstrates his easy mastery of the art of simultaneous eating and drinking while talking at warp-speed: "You don't have to teach children philosophy," he declares, swigging a glass of Coke and scooping up mouthfuls of pastries, "they are philosophers already. We are born curious. Young children ask questions all the time 'Does God exist? Why do the stars twinkle? How do birds fly?'"

For Gaarder, such questions are the starting point of philosophy. For the rest of us,

"Why do stars twinkle?" might seem a long haul from *cogito ergo sum*, but Gaarder is sure it is a journey worth making. And he should know. His novel *Sophie's World*—a mixture of storytelling and a history of philosophy from the pre-Socratics to Sartre—was top of the Norwegian best-seller list for three years, and the best-selling book worldwide in 1995.

Gaarder, a boyish 44, who reminds one more of Abba than Aristotle, was initially "baffled" by its success. "When my publishers decided to go ahead with it, I wrote and thanked them for taking on such a non-commercial project." Now he has no doubt about the reason for the

book's world-wide triumph.

"People have a great hunger to understand the world they live in. They want to study philosophy, but in a playful, accessible form. The story is our mother tongue. The human brain is made for stories, more than for storing information."

Before becoming a superstar, Gaarder taught philosophy for 11 years with undimmed enthusiasm to recalcitrant teenagers in his native Norway, where every school-leaver has to take a six-month course in the subject before commencing their university studies. While he was teaching he also started to write

ILLUSTRATIONS BY ROSEMARY WELL

BEST BUYS FOR SEASONAL GIVING

POLES APART

Galen Rowell

This unusual book is a visual feast telling the story of life at the edge of the world in the icy wastelands of the Arctic and the Antarctic. Stunning photography conveys the stark, desolate beauty of the landscape, the amazing variety of the flora and fauna, and the colossal impact of man's presence (both indigenous and exploitative) on one of the world's most fragile environments. Rowell's accompanying essays take us behind



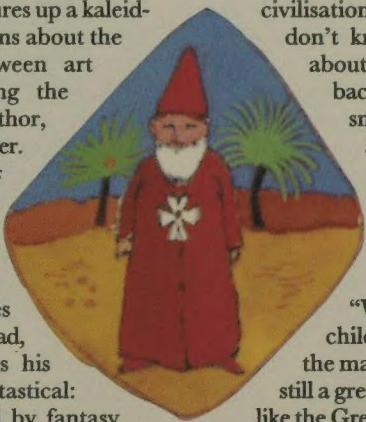
the camera to explain the painstaking—and sometimes dangerous—processes that went into the creation of his beautiful images. Mitchell Beazley, £25 (ref no 1857 303 372•).



fiction and his first book—a collection of short stories for adults—was published in 1986. He first enjoyed literary acclaim in Norway in 1990 with *The Solitaire Mystery*, which was written for young people, and won the Norwegian Literary Critics' Award and the Ministry of Cultural and Scientific Affairs' Literary Prize. This allowed him to give up teaching and take to writing full time although, he says: "The paradox is that I had more time to write when I was teacher." But he has never lost the commitment to educate. Preserving a sense of wonder about what he calls "this fantastic enigmatic fairy-tale we live in" is the main thrust of his work.

His new book, *The Christmas Mystery*, follows a Norwegian boy, Joachim, as he opens the windows in a magical advent calendar. Each day's window contains a chapter in the continuing story of a young girl as she travels in time and space from 1950s' Norway to Bethlehem at the time of Jesus' birth. As in *Sophie's World*, the story-within-a-story device conjures up a kaleidoscope of questions about the relationship between art and life, blurring the edges between author, character and reader.

But *The Christmas Mystery* has none of the earlier book's didactic discourses on Hume, Descartes and Spinoza. Instead, Gaarder indulges his interest in the fantastical: "I am fascinated by fantasy and imagination," he enthuses. "You can get to know someone through their imagination, because everyone is unique. I like to think of imagination as being like perfume, which smells differently from skin to skin. And



"When I was a child in the 50s, the marketplace was still a great social focus, like the Greek *agora*. Then along came television. That too became a kind of marketplace. When there was just one channel, everyone could watch the same programmes and discuss them the next day. Now, with cable and satellite, we have lost

the same with fantasy—all my stories have a fantastic element, but I like to link it to humans of flesh and blood."

Gaarder is aware that this mix of fantasy and reality is part of a tradition that includes such works as *The Little Prince* and *Alice in Wonderland*, in which apparent flights of fancy illustrate profound arguments. Are such books written for children or for adults? "I would say both," says Gaarder emphatically. "When I write for small children, I want adults to get something from the book too." Indeed, as read by a child, *The Christmas Mystery* is a simple seasonal romp, but for an older reader there are layers of meaning waiting to be discovered. The device of a time-travelling Norwegian teenager as a main character allows Gaarder to explore the complex issues of culture and identity that have made us what we are today.

This continuity of culture is something that Gaarder holds dear. "There are lots of people living in the great cities of the world who aren't part of civilisation, in that they

don't know anything about their spiritual background." His smile momentarily dims half a watt as he remembers a more traditional world, that's now lost:

"When I was a child in the 50s, the marketplace was still a great social focus,

like the Greek *agora*. Then

along came television. That too became a kind of marketplace. When there was just one channel, everyone could watch the same programmes and discuss them the next day. Now, with cable and satellite, we have lost



something important. There's a new need for a common culture."

He sees philosophy as being of practical use in this search for a cultural identity. "Studying philosophy increases your identity, giving you more strength as an individual because it doesn't ask questions like, 'What have you got?', but 'What are you? What is happiness? What is a just society?' These questions don't have specific answers, but it is crucial that each generation and each individual considers them. Philosophy increases the critical sense. And all societies need a critical, reflecting young generation or they are dangerous societies."

He pauses for a nano-second and I lob in a quick query: isn't there a danger that too much questioning and rational analysis can alienate you from the real world? He dismisses any such thought: "For me philosophy is not just cerebral, it's also a question of sensuality. It is very important for me to be part of nature. At home, I can leave Oslo and be in the forest in a few minutes. That is what gives me my inspiration. The forest. Nature. The countryside. So when I ask, 'Who am I? What is Nature?', I'm talking about physical things. And I don't think at all that my mind is more

important than my body—philosophy includes both."

It's an arresting image, Gaarder wrestling with the questions of existence in the forest depths. I ask him how his two sons react to his philosophising. "They're not interested, and that's the way it should be," he says. "I'm not trying to be their philosophy teacher—it's more important to be a good father. But they are being brought up with philosophy because we're open-minded. We discuss everything."

And what of the future, as we race along the information superhighway, shall we still need books? "The talk today is of interactive communication, but what is more interactive than reading a book? It takes far more cerebral megabytes than playing with a CD-Rom."

The fact that he has captivated so many people—children, adults, even normally irredeemably square-eyed teenagers—with what are essentially exhortations to philosophise in story form, seems to prove him right.

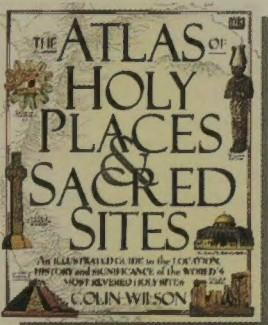
DAVID MOORE

"The Christmas Mystery" by Jostein Gaarder is published November 11, by Phoenix House, at £14.99 (ref no 1861 590 156•).

THE ATLAS OF HOLY PLACES & SACRED SITES

Colin Wilson

The story of man's spiritual quest is written in stone spanning six millennia. This lavishly illustrated, beautiful book explores 100 of the world's sacred sites, explaining in great detail the significance of their architecture and artifacts. With the publication of *The Outsider* in 1956, Colin Wilson made his mark as one of the outstanding minds of his generation. Often at odds with conventional wisdom, he has, nevertheless, established himself as a writer with a deep understanding of the human

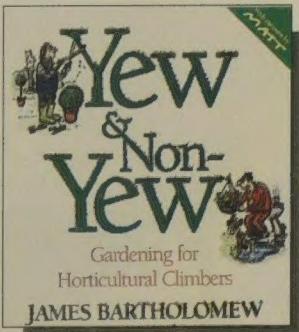


condition and its spiritual needs. This book is a timely antidote to the materialism of the late-20th-century Christmas. Dorling Kindersley, £19.99 (ref no 0751 303 372•).

YEW & NON-YEW

James Bartholomew & cartoons by Matt

Subtitled *Gardening for Horticultural Climbers*, this is a hilarious guide to polite garden etiquette as practised by "Haughty-Culturalists". "Yew" includes old brick paving, any rose whose name begins with Comte de, crab-apple trees, weeding by hand, nurseries and absolutely anything recommended by Rosemary Verey, while concrete patio paving, hybrid teas, hanging baskets, pampas grass, barbecues, garden centres and all gold-coloured trees are beyond the pale. On a more serious level, Bartholomew's erudite text is



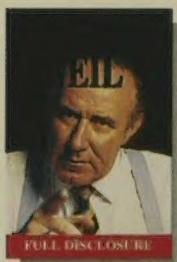
encyclopaedic in scope, crammed with practical information on every aspect of gardening. Nancy Mitford must be chuckling in heaven. Century, £9.99 (ref no: 0712 679 054•).



COCAINE NIGHTS

J. G. Ballard

Opening a Ballard novel is akin to climbing into a high-powered sports car: you face a smooth, but exciting ride. All is not well in the upmarket Spanish resort of Estrella del Mar where Charles Prentice has arrived to support brother Frank, charged with arson and the murder of five. When Frank unexpectedly pleads guilty, Charles pursues the real killer and finds drugs and pornography behind the sun and sangria. This unforgiving look at modern society is gripping from beginning to end. Flamingo, £16.99 (ref no 0002 241 358•).



FULL DISCLOSURE

Andrew Neil

"An electrifying exposé of the stories behind the headlines"—for once the publishers blurb is accurate. In the publishing sensation of the year, Neil lifts the lid on his decade as Editor of *The Sunday Times*, giving us a blow-by-blow account of the momentous events of the 80s and early 90s. He once admitted that nothing gave him more pleasure on Sunday mornings than knowing his newspaper had ruined a few breakfasts. This book will ruin more than a few more; essential for anyone who opens a newspaper. Macmillan, £20 (ref no 0333 646 827•).



DISTANCE

Colin Thubron

A haunting tale of post-grad student Edward Sanders who "comes to" in a café suffering from amnesia and finds he has lost two years of his life. He has a fragmented memory of Jacqueline, love of his life, but she is not the woman he lives with, and so begins a painful journey to unravel the past and the tragic cause of his plight; a disturbing exploration of memory and the fragile human psyche. Heinemann, £15.99 (ref no 0434 002 577•).



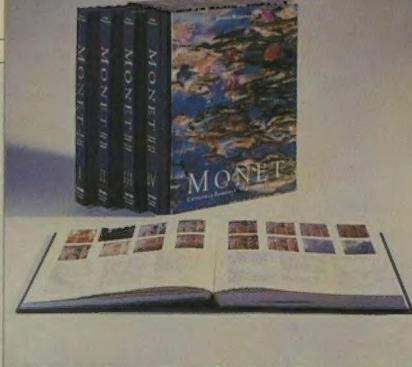
THROUGH THE DARK LABYRINTH

Gordon Bowker

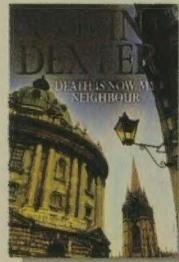
"Nobody can wield the English language like you" was Henry Miller's reaction to Lawrence Durrell's magnum opus, *The Alexandria Quartet*. Durrell's life was as complex as his prose. Plucked from his beloved Tibet at the age of 10, he disliked England, preferring the sensuous Mediterranean that inspired him. Bowker captures the spirit of a disturbed genius. Sinclair Stevenson, £25 (ref no 1856 194 485•).

BARGAIN BOXED SET

Book bargain of the season, if not the century, is the four-volume *Monet Catalogue Raisonné* containing all of the impressionist artist's 2,000 pictures. First published in the early 70s, a set of the former version recently sold at Christie's for £10,000; now controversial publishers Taschen have taken over and re-released these jumbo volumes at an astonishing £99.95. In addition to slashing the price of this collection of books which took previous



publishers, the distinguished Wildenstein Institute, 40 years to prepare, Taschen have updated the catalogue and added 100 rediscovered and previously unpublished canvases. They have also included a new first volume as an introduction to the artist's colourful life. (Ref no: 3822 885 592•)



DEATH IS NOW MY NEIGHBOUR

Colin Dexter

This, the 12th Inspector Morse novel, will hopefully be remembered for more than the much-hyped disclosure of our hero's Christian name. An attractive young woman has been shot dead at point-blank range through her kitchen window. Morse follows the trail that leads from her grim terraced house to the heart of academia, Lonsdale College, where the battle for the position of Master is in progress and a tantalising web of intrigue and betrayal unravels. As we have come to expect, much of the enjoyment stems from the exchanges

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between the sombre detective and his down-to-earth side-kick—Morse and Lewis must one of the great pairings in 20th-century literature. Macmillan, £16.99 (ref no 0333 646 827•).

ROS DRINKWATER

BOOKS FOR COOKS

Star chefs are out in force this Christmas, with a shelf full of stylish cookery books that you can either give as gifts or use as inspiration for your own Christmas table.

Nico, the first book in 10 years from the redoubtable Mr Ladenis, reproduces recipes from his Grosvenor House restaurant which helped earn him three Michelin stars. These recipes are wonderfully easy to follow and straightforward to prepare. Includes sections on the use of oils and other basics. Macmillan, £20 (ref no: 0333 651 774•).



BOOKS FOR COOKS

A Blanc Christmas, by chef Raymond Blanc of Le Manoir aux Quat' Saisons, brings together a host of ingredients to make a perfect Christmas celebration. In addition to 12 seasonal menus he includes chapters on edible gifts and memories of childhood Christmases in France, plus tips on wine, table decorations and flower arrangements. Headline, £25 (ref no 0747 218 072•).

Music & Menus for Christmas by Dorchester chef Willi Elsener comes with a CD of Christmas carols for cooks to sing along while they stir. The theme is festive eating from around the world: baste your German roast goose in time to "The First Noel" or prepare your prawns with pawpaw and coriander sauce to "I Saw Three Ships". Pavilion, £16.99 (ref no 1857 935 349•).



"Let's meet at The Ritz!"

Pre-theatre drinks?



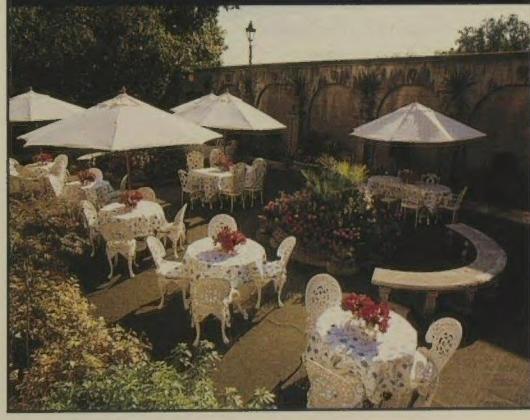
Dinner for two?



Afternoon tea?



Lunch on the terrace?



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Twenty long years
pass until
the mysteries of its
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your
imagination.